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PASTOR'S COUNSELS

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TO

YOUNG CHRISTIANS,

IN A SERIES OF

FAMILIAR ADDRESSES

FOLLOWING A

REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

Rev. A. C. BALDWIN,

AUTHOR OF "HELEN AND HER COUSIN," "THEMES AND TEXTS FOR
THE PULPIT," A PRIZE ESSAY, BEING "FRIENDLY LETTERS
TO A CHRISTIAN SLAVEHOLDER,"—ETC.

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Recd. M. P. 7-30-40

A PASTOR'S COUNSELS TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THERE is no spectacle on which a truly benevolent mind looks with more sincere pleasure, than on a company of young persons coming out from the world, renouncing its follies and vanities for the love they bear the Saviour, and making a public profession of their faith. But still, every such spectacle, interesting as it is, awakens feelings, not only of heartfelt joy, but also of deep solicitude. The thought cannot fail to be suggested, How will these professed converts hold out? Are they all *real* disciples, and born of the Spirit? If they are true Christians, what kind of Christians will they prove? Will they be ornaments to the Church, and strengthen it, and carry to a higher elevation the standard of piety? Or will they hang as dead weights upon it; disappoint the hopes of their brethren; prove recreant to duty; backslide, and thus bring a reproach upon the cause of Christ? These are most important

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questions, and it is impossible to answer them in advance. Time only can determine. It is well to look at the bright side. No advantage is to be derived from foreboding evil. On the contrary, it is our privilege, and it is our duty, to take as favorable a prospective view as circumstances will permit, and cherish the delightful hope that the entire number of those denominated "Young Converts," are destined to become both ornaments and pillars in the Church of the living God.

The religious character of a young disciple is, in a great measure, unformed, although he may have been born again. Whether he will make a warm-hearted, active, whole-souled, consistent Christian,—staying up the hands of his pastor, aiding his brethren, and ready to every good work,—or whether he will be a cold, indolent, wavering, double-minded, niggardly professor,—a grief to his pastor and other Christian friends, remains to be decided. Very much depends upon the manner in which he commences the Christian life, and the views he takes of its duties and responsibilities. If he supposes that now, because he has a hope of being saved at last, and has joined himself to the number of God's people, he has nothing to do but to float quietly and at ease down the stream of human life, he is very much mistaken. Whoever commences his Christian course, must at the very *outset*, have before him a

high standard of attainment in holy living, or he will probably have, in after life, little more than a "name to live," and will never accomplish anything for the Master worth naming.

It is with an affectionate regard for both the temporal and spiritual interests of the young, just entering their Master's service, that the following pages have been prepared; containing counsels which it is hoped may help them shape their course in life, shun the dangers which they are certain to encounter, assist them in forming characters of usefulness and piety, prepare them for both the joys and sorrows incident to this mortal state, and animate and cheer them by presenting the blessedness awaiting them in heaven.

In the pages of this book, the writer begs leave to address his young friends with great familiarity, as if he were holding conversation with them by the fireside.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.—
2 PET. 1 : 10.

IN giving counsel to young professors, the first thing I would say to you, my dear friends, is, *consider well the groundwork of your piety,—the foundation on which you have built your hopes of heaven.* I know of nothing more important for you, and everybody else, than this. It will be of little use to instruct you in respect to your duties, relations, dangers, and responsibilities in the various phases of Christian life, unless you are entitled to the name of "Christians."

There would be an absurdity in taking much pains to point out to a captain of a vessel bound for Liverpool, the dangers, the rocks, the shoals, the currents, to be guarded against in a voyage to the Sandwich Islands. It would be useless to talk to a man about the incidents he would meet with on his way from Springfield to New York, when he was going to Boston. So, as you are addressed on subjects appropriate to those who are

going to Mount Zion, the first question for you to settle is, are you on the road thither?

There is no question which a person can ask of greater moment than, "Am I a Christian?" You will not put by this question as unnecessary because it has once or twice been before your mind, and you have come to a decision in regard to it with some degree of satisfaction. There will never be a time until you get to heaven, if you shall be so happy as to reach there, when this question will not be an appropriate one for you to consider and carefully examine.

The evidence on this subject is not fixed and permanent. We may have what we call very good evidence to-day, and but little to-morrow; or we may, unexpectedly to ourselves, find evidence which bears very hard on the other side, and which may nearly or quite balance the evidence in our favor, so that our minds may still be held in doubt.

In this great and important matter, I would lead your minds to a thorough and careful discrimination.

In the *first* place, let us give a few moments' attention to several particulars which sometimes, but not always, attend true Christian experience, but which do not of themselves constitute evidence of piety.

1. *A sudden waking up of the mind to the sub-*

ject of religion, does not determine that a person is a Christian. There are many persons who, during their whole lives, have given hardly a moment's serious thought in a personal, practical way, to eternal things. They attend church, are interested in able and well-composed sermons on evangelical themes; but religion as a personal, experimental matter, has engaged none of their attention. In a time of revival, or general religious interest, this class of persons are often suddenly aroused from their apathy, and are led to think and talk much on religious topics; and not unfrequently they apply the subject to themselves with a considerable degree of anxiety and interest. But this is no evidence of piety. The mind may be for a time awakened, and then relapse again into the same state of stupidity and sloth; just as a person can be awakened from a natural sleep for a few moments, and then fall to sleep again just as before.

2. *Emotion* is not conclusive evidence of piety. By emotion is meant an involuntary excited state of mind, occasioned by some object or subject brought before it. Sometimes the emotion is pleasant, sometimes painful. The objects that awaken our emotions are much diversified. They may pertain solely to this world; they may pertain to eternity. There is nothing more adapted to excite emotion than religious truth. There is

much difference, however, in different individuals in this respect. The minds of some persons, by the contemplation of the word of God, and the fearful realities of the world to come, are wrought up to a high degree of feeling; others are excited but a very little. The minds of the two classes are different constitutionally; you might as well try to make their countenances look alike, as to make them feel alike. But involuntary feeling, or emotion, is not religion. Because a person has a great deal of it, it does not follow that he is a Christian, neither because he has but little, does it follow that he is *not* a Christian. Emotion is good in its place; it subserves a useful purpose by leading to a right course of voluntary mental action, and then it is the *action* which is virtuous, not the emotion. Very frequently emotion is *not* followed by virtuous action, and then it may be asked, what is it good for?

Take an illustration: Two persons walk together into a military hospital, crowded with the suffering and the dying. The spectacle produces in one, intense painful excitement, and he cannot bear the sight of what is around him, and he proposes to his companion to retire. "No," says the other, whose feelings and nervous sensibilities are but little excited, "let us look about, perhaps we may find an opportunity to do some good here." At this moment a person is brought in with a

limb shattered by a cannon-ball, and which must be amputated; and the surgeon wishes one of these men to assist. One of them replies, "It pains me so much to see suffering that I cannot do it," and he makes for the door. The other individual instantly and cheerfully steps forward to hold the mangled limb, or catch the blood, or help tie the arteries, and in all ways to contribute as much as possible for the relief of the poor sufferer. Now which of these is the benevolent individual,—the one whose feelings were so much excited that he left the room, or he that remained calm and lent his assistance? This illustration is designed to show that mere emotion, *i. e.*, excited feeling, is no proof that a person is good or bad; but it is voluntary exercise of the will that determines the character.

Now a person's feelings may be very much excited on the subject of religion; his emotions may be extremely vivid and strong, and yet he may not be a Christian; and, on the other hand, one may be almost *destitute* of emotion, and yet his will, or his heart, may be right in the sight of God. The question is not so much how does a man passively feel, as what is it his sincere, fixed, permanent purpose to do?

3. *No sudden transition from a state of great distress and fear, to one of joy and hope, constitutes evidence of piety.* Such a change, it is true,

does often accompany a real change of heart ; but not always. Some of the best Christians I ever knew, could never tell the moment, nor the hour, no, nor the day when light first began to dawn in the soul, any more than we can tell the precise moment when day begins to break in the east. While many sincere Christians have experienced no such sudden, conscious change from darkness to light, and from fear to joyful hope, there have been multitudes who have had this experience in a high degree, whose subsequent lives and deportment gave decisive evidence that it was all a delusion, and that they had no more religion than they had before.

There is reason to fear that many regard this as their chief evidence that they have passed from death unto life ; viz., that at such a time, and place, they felt a great change in their feelings,—the burden was removed from their minds, and they felt happy ; whereas, taken by itself, that is no evidence at all, for it is an experience very common both to true Christians and self-deceivers.

4. It is no evidence of piety that *a striking passage of Scripture is accidentally or providentially brought before the mind*. I have heard of persons indulging hope on as slight ground as this,—they opened their Bibles at random, and their eye first lighted on a passage like this : “Thy sins are forgiven thee ;” or “Be of good comfort ; rise, he

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callesth thee ;” and this was regarded as a special providence bidding them hope. Now to build a hope of eternal life on a foundation like this, is like attempting to lay the corner-stone of a house in *mid air*. One has just as much to support it as the other. Similar in character to this, is the practice of some of relying for evidence of their acceptance with God on dreams, and visions, and fancied supernatural voices. The piety of all such, if this is all the evidence they have, will be as evanescent as their dreams. Nor

5. *Does the good opinion which others may have formed of us*, constitute evidence of our piety. There is no doubt but the Apostles had a good opinion of Judas until he betrayed his Master, and of Ananias and Sapphira until they lied to the Holy Ghost, and attempted to deceive God. And so they had of Simon Magus, until he proposed to purchase with money the power of communicating the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands. It is comparatively an easy matter to deport ourselves so as to make a good impression on the minds of those who judge only by the external appearance. Others may think well of us, and express very strongly their confidence in our piety ; but there must be other grounds for us to believe that we are Christians than that others think we are.

Again, it is no evidence that we are Christians

that we have had vivid and soul-inspiring conceptions of the happiness of heaven. The descriptions we read in our Bibles of the glories of heaven, and the ideas we may obtain from the language of others on the subject, may so work upon our imaginations, as almost to transport us to that world in fancy, and we seem, as it were, already to see the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, and hear the songs of the redeemed, and behold the crowns which we ourselves shall wear. Now these conceptions of the heavenly state, so far as the material imagery is concerned, may be nothing but poetry, and probably *are* nothing but poetry in our minds, if the presence of God and holiness do not constitute in our estimation the chief ingredients of the glory and blessedness of that world where we hope to dwell.

Nor, finally, is it any sure evidence that we are Christians, *that we have at times manifested considerable zeal in religion.* Zeal is a good thing, and very desirable. I wish there was much more of it than there is. But there is a zeal in religion which is "not according to knowledge," and there is sometimes a zeal, not objectionable in itself, which is not based on evangelical experience. It has been by no means uncommon for the most zealous reformers — revivalists, and even revival preachers who in fiery zeal would distance all their brethren — to apostatize, and thus evince that

their zeal was not for God's glory, but for themselves, or for the denomination with which they were identified.

I have thus specified at considerable length, a number of things which very often accompany true piety, and some of them nearly always, but which are distinct from piety itself, and are no certain criteria of it, and should not be relied on, as they sometimes are, as evidence that it exists. We will now consider,

Secondly, in what genuine piety does consist. And I will endeavor to give a definition of it at once comprehensive and brief. True piety consists in a supreme love of God, implying a *fixed, intelligent, voluntary, permanent choice of God as the supreme good or portion of the soul, and a choice of his service as the great end and object of life, and all for his glory*. This is only a paraphrase of the language of our Saviour, in which he answers the same question: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; that is the first commandment."

We have here, in a few words, the sum and substance of all true holiness, whether it be on earth, or in heaven,—a free, determined, permanent love and choice of God and his service. The great question, then, for each one of us to ask is, "Have I, under the enlightening and regenerating influences

of the Holy Spirit, made this choice ; am I living under the influence of this great purpose?" If you can settle this point, my friends, you can answer the question whether you are Christians or not. To assist you in this matter, I will mention a few things which are involved in this purpose, and inseparable from it.

1. *A renunciation of the world* as your chief good. If you have chosen God as your portion, you must have given up the world. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

2. *Repentance*; implying a sorrow for sin, and a forsaking of it.

3. *Faith in Christ* ; a belief in his human and divine nature — in his power and willingness to save by his atoning blood, and a humble reliance upon it for pardon.

4. *A Christian life* — a life of obedience — a life of prayer — a life of duty, — in short, a life of unreserved consecration to God, desiring to spend and be spent in his service. This is all implied in this great purpose which underlies everything pertaining to religion, and which constitutes the essence of true piety.

This work of analyzing and scrutinizing your hopes should be continued as long as life lasts, and be oft repeated.

You should have stated and regular seasons for self-examination as well as for prayer, at which

the question should come up, not merely "What kind of a Christian am I?" but, "Am I a Christian at all?" And you should not dispose of the matter in a brief, summary way, by asking a few questions. There is too much at stake here — salvation or misery, heaven or hell, will be the issue. And that you may arrive at a correct result, you must earnestly seek the aids of the Holy Spirit, for without his assistance it will be of no avail. Your deceitful heart, in concert with the adversary, will be likely to overpower your weak judgment, and cause you to think that you are something when you are nothing, unless God help you.

Let me then urge you, my friends, — especially those of you who have recently, as you hope, espoused the cause of Christ, — to diligently and faithfully "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; and give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

CHAPTER III.

DANGERS OF YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. — 1 PET. 5: 8.

THE life of a Christian has often been compared to a journey, or pilgrimage through an enemy's country, where the traveler will be continually opposed, harassed, perplexed, and tempted, as he passes along. The comparison is a very apt one. Those who have tried the Christian life have found it so. This world is a revolted province of God's kingdom, and although it is not always to be thus, it is now, and has been since the apostasy, to a very great extent, in subjection to the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;"—in other words, the *devil*. Through what he claims (though wrongfully) as his domains, the Christian must pass on his way to Mount Zion. As might be expected of such an enemy, he will dispute every inch of ground in the pilgrim's pathway;—will throw obstacles in his course;—and will tempt him to turn aside from the straight and narrow road.

Sometimes the adversary will *flatter*, and sometimes *threaten* him, and will use a thousand methods, no matter what, provided they answer his purpose, to hinder the Christian on his journey. Probably the adversary is never more busy than when he is tempting young converts. He dislikes to lose them from his ranks; but if they will persist in their determination to forsake him, and go to heaven, he will use every artifice to render them as inefficient and useless Christians as possible.

There is ground, therefore, for comparing the Christian life to a journey through an enemy's country, beset on every side with difficulties and dangers. Perhaps, however, we sometimes lay too much at the door of Satan and his allies. We all have a principle of *evil* within ourselves,—evil hearts of sin and unbelief,—and we are often tempted, as the Apostle James says, when we are “drawn away of our own lusts, and enticed.” Certain it is, that there is something in our hearts, but partially sanctified, to appeal to; and unless we keep a strict watch over ourselves, we shall be sure to fall in with the designs of the adversary, and yield to his suggestions. How much of our danger, and how many of our temptations, proceed from the devil, and how many come from ourselves and other sources, it is impossible for us to say. It is of but little consequence to us from what

source they come, since they actually exist, and we have got to encounter them.

I shall now proceed to point out some of the most prominent of these dangers, for the benefit of all those who are just setting out on their pilgrimage to heaven.

Having had considerable experience in the world, and many opportunities of observation, I hope, my young friends, that I may be able to give you such instructions and warnings of the dangers and temptations which will be almost certain to assail you, as may enable you to guard against and resist them. It is an old but correct saying, "to be forewarned is to be forearmed."

1. The *first* danger which I shall mention—and it is one of the first to which a young Christian is exposed—is a *feeling of security*; i. e.,—an impression that there *is* no danger. When a person fully makes up his mind to serve God, and actually forms the great purpose to do so, and consecrates himself to him and his service, he generally feels strong; he has committed himself. He enters upon his Christian life, and he finds it *pleasant*. The love of God is shed abroad in his soul, and it is sweet. He enjoys himself better than he ever did before. Go to him, and ask what he would sell his religion for, and go back to the service of sin, and become an enemy of God, and he would answer, "Not for ten thousand

worlds ;" "Nothing shall ever separate me from the love of Christ." In the case of a *real* convert these feelings are sincere ; nothing can be more so. They are all very well. It is pleasant and very desirable to see them. Indeed, without them, there could be but little if any evidence of piety. Now the danger is, that the convert, in the ardor of his love, and in the pleasure he takes in looking away from earth to heaven, will feel that the battle is fought, the enemy vanquished, and the victory won. If it is suggested to him, "Perhaps by and by you may forsake Christ, yield to temptation, and again, partially at least, become a willing captive to Satan," he exclaims with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" It seems so unreasonable, and so sinful to depart from Christ, and serve the god of this world, that he thinks it impossible that he should ever do it. Now this is the very point of danger against which I wish to put you on your guard,—an overweening self-confidence that you are proof against temptation, and the assaults of the adversary. How confident Peter felt that he should not deny his Lord ! That confidence was, no doubt, the suggestion of Satan, and it was the occasion of his fall. Peter was forewarned too. Christ told him that Satan had laid a plot to catch him, and that he would be successful. Peter didn't believe it, and strongly asserted that he

would be the last man in the world to deny his Master. And yet the poor man did it.

Let me tell you, my dear friends, that one of the most common, and one of the most successful temptations of the adversary is, to persuade young converts that they are *in no danger* of being overcome; and when he has once made and confirmed that impression, he has more than half gained his purpose.

2. A *second* danger to which the young convert will most assuredly be exposed is, temptation to an *indolent, slothful spirit in regard to religious duties*. Sometimes, when the Christian retires to pray, read his Bible, and meditate, a lethargic spirit will steal over him. Perhaps he has been making considerable bodily exertion, and is fatigued. His mind is somewhat inactive, his spirits flag, and he is tempted to hurry over his devotions, if not to omit them altogether. Bodily ease, or sloth, pleads, "It is only for once, and the lack of interest and engagedness to-day may be made up to-morrow by a little extra time or extra engagedness." Beware how you yield to these pleadings of sloth. Depend upon it, this temptation is a bucket of water thrown by Satan to quench the flame of your piety. If you yield to it once, you will give him a decided advantage over you, and you will be almost certain to yield *again*; and every time you yield, you will grow

worse and worse, until in a little while, this slothful spirit will become habitual. Your closet will become a cold, uninteresting place, and you will be tempted to neglect it altogether. Let this spirit of indolence get the ascendancy in the closet, and it will be certain to rule everywhere. It will lead you to read your Bible in a listless, careless manner, until by and by you will read it but seldom. It will keep you at home from the prayer-meeting, and from the house of God, if you happen to be a little tired; and the duty of meditation and self-examination will be laid aside entirely. I repeat the caution, my friends: beware of an indolent, slothful spirit. Very often, and I may say generally, it is a stepping-stone to spiritual declension. If Peter had watched and prayed with Christ in the garden, instead of going to sleep, it is not probable he would have denied him. So, my young friends, if you will resist this indolent, stupid spirit, rouse up your sluggish minds, chide your cold hearts and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan," you will immediately find the flame of your love, which was flickering, and almost expiring in its socket, lighting up again into a bright and cheerful glow, and God will smile upon and bless you.

3. A *third* danger to which the young Christian is exposed is *worldly-mindedness*. The world is full of temptations. One of them is pleasure.

There are pleasures both innocent and desirable ; there are others which are evil and only evil. In tempting the young Christian, the adversary would not be likely to select those which are gross and groveling in their nature, but those which are innocent in themselves, becoming wrong only by excess, or by being enjoyed at improper times and places. You will be in much danger, my friends, from temptations to gratify the pleasures of *taste*. God has created us with susceptibilities to a high degree of enjoyment by beholding what is beautiful. And He has made a great many, and a great variety of beautiful things for us to look upon. Now the danger is, that in gratifying this principle of taste, you will be led, imperceptibly, to the exercise of the sinful passions of pride and vanity. The same taste which admires gay flowers, admires also gay *clothing* and costly ornaments ; and here is where you may very easily, by excess, be betrayed into sin.

The pleasures of *sense* constitute another wordly temptation of which you are in danger. These pleasures are all proper in their place, and when laid under suitable restraint ; but nothing is more easy than to pass the boundary of innocence. The appetites may be enjoyed with moderation, if confined within the limits which God has prescribed for them. Taking advantage of this appointment of Providence, the devil will tempt

you to intemperance in the use of what is lawful, or to gratify your appetites in an unlawful way.

Avarice is another worldly temptation of which you are in danger. The accumulation of property by honest industry and frugality, with a proper end in view, is not forbidden—it is lawful; but “the love of money is the root of all evil.” Avarice and covetousness God has ranked among the most hateful, soul-destroying sins. A temptation to get rich, it is probable, is one of the strongest and most insinuating of any that will ever assail you. Commencing life with a laudable desire to earn an honest livelihood and to gain a moderate competence, unless you are on the watch, you will find yourselves, before you are aware of it, “making haste to be rich.” Gold will become your idol, and you will be found worshipping at the shrine of Mammon. Worldliness in this form is one of the strongest, and one of the most common temptations that ever assails the Christian. Deluded by the belief that he is only providing things necessary for himself and his own household, before he suspects the real state of the case, the Christian is often making everything subservient to one object; and that is, to gather up riches. He is lured from the pilgrim’s path, and turns aside to visit the silver mine kept by Demas, from which there is but little hope of his return. He becomes so much en-

gaged and absorbed with his "muck-rake," that he loses sight of the glorious crown which is shining over his head, and which might be his. Our Lord is very full and explicit in his instructions on the subject of worldliness: "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." Worldliness is the great sin of the Church. It always has been so; it is so still. It does more to paralyze her energies, and bring her down in the dust, than all other things put together. Look at the great mass of professing Christians at the present day; what are they doing? what are they thinking about? what seems to interest them most? It is obvious to any one that the great subject before the mind generally is making money; and just in proportion as they are absorbed in this, farther than to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," do they neglect their duties to Christ and his cause. The devil knows perfectly well the power of worldly possessions to steal the affections and ensnare the soul. Hence he hoped to overcome the virtue of our Saviour by offering him this world as a present; Achan he seduced by a "wedge of gold;" Judas, by "thirty pieces of silver;" and he has seduced many a professor of religion by a

sum much less than that. In angling for men, he almost always baits his hook with a piece of *silver*. In most cases it answers his purpose; though sometimes, in order to catch the cautious ones, he adds a piece of gold, and then he seldom fails of his game. You cannot, therefore, be too much on your guard against the love of money. It is one of the most formidable dangers you will have to encounter on your way to heaven, and one before which you will be the most likely to fall.

4. Another danger to which the young convert is exposed, is *bad example*. We are creatures of imitation. Without being aware of it at the time, gradually and imperceptibly we become conformed, in some measure at least, to the habits of acting and thinking of those with whom we hold intercourse. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Show me what company a man keeps, what examples are daily set before him, and I will tell you, without much danger of mistake, what kind of a man he is. The character, and especially the character of youth, is very much influenced by its surroundings. This is remarkably true of the young Christian. If he is thrown into the society of those who are consistent, and devotedly pious, he will be likely to be assimilated to them. If he associates with worldly-

mind, lukewarm professors, he, it is probable, will soon be like them. If he associates with the ungodly, selecting them as his companions and bosom friends, he will be so much under their influence, that if he do not apostatize and lose his soul, he will come so *near* it that he will be "saved so as by fire." Now there are many more evil influences in the world than good ones. There are but very few whose example it would be safe *in all* respects to follow. The best of men say and do a great many foolish, not to say wicked things; how much more, those whose standard of piety is less elevated, and especially those who have no piety at all! Here is a great source of danger to the young Christian. He is, in some respects, more in danger from the evil examples of good men than of the wicked; for in one case he is generally on his guard, and in the other, he is not. It is very natural for him to feel that it is safe to follow the examples of his elder brethren, who have a good standing in the church; but you should remember, my young friends, that it is not safe for you to follow implicitly anybody but Jesus Christ. You should always act with discrimination; and when contemplating any course of conduct, your inquiry should always be, not, "Is it followed by this or that individual?" but, "Is it right? Is this a course of conduct which the Saviour approves?" If not, no matter who of

your Christian friends pursue it, it should be avoided.

5. Another danger to which a young Christian is exposed, is a *temptation to swerve* from a straightforward Christian course, for *the sake of popularity*. It is natural for us all to desire to please, and be held in high estimation by our fellow creatures. This desire, if held in check, and if, whenever exercised, it is guided and controlled by religious principle, is productive of good. It is not wrong to "love the praise of men ;" but the wrong consists in loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. Occasions often occur in the life of the Christian when one must give way to the other. To go right forward in the discharge of duty, oppose what is wrong, and advocate and defend the right, is often the surest way to bring a man into discredit with a certain portion of the community whose goodwill it is desirable to retain. To maintain his integrity without making any compromise of principle, requires, often, a severe struggle. If, in the course of your future lives, my young friends, you are ever placed in such circumstances,—and no doubt you will be, you may be certain that Satan, in concert with the remaining corruption of your own hearts, will make use of every artifice to overcome you. He will tell you what a dreadful thing it would be, to become unpopular with this

individual and that one, and lose your influence over them, or perhaps excite their enmity ! Then you will be tempted to relax, somewhat, the strictness of your principles ; and you will begin to question with yourselves in this way : " May it not be that I have been a little too rigid in my views, — a little too puritanical ? Should I not be more useful by lowering my standard somewhat, and making a compromise, and yield a little of what I have been in the habit of regarding Christian duty ? Paul says he ' became all things to all men,' — then why should not I ? " forgetting that it was in respect to things indifferent, the Apostle said this. At this juncture, Satan will be likely to transform himself into the semblance of an angel of light, and tell you how much good you may do by retaining your popularity with the wicked. It will be well if, in this debate between your conscience and your old Adam, aided by the devil, you are not overcome by sophistry, and suffer your eyes to become so blinded that you will call light darkness and darkness light ; and, for the sake of pleasing men, will displease God, and bring a reproach upon your profession.

I have by no means, my young Christian friends, mentioned all the dangers to which you will be exposed in your heavenward pilgrimage : it is impossible to do so. I have specified some of the most prominent, and which you will be almost certain to encounter.

I shall conclude this chapter by making a few suggestions, in view of these and other dangers and temptations to which you will be exposed.

1. Be *always on the lookout*. You should be like a faithful sentinel, set at the outpost of a camp to watch the approach of the enemy. He does not relax his vigilance for a moment. Neither must you. Your enemy will approach you very slyly. He will not sound a trumpet before him, thus putting you on your guard; but he will steal upon you as gradually and as silently as the shades of evening spread themselves over the landscape. Unless you are constantly on the watch, you will be ensnared by him before you know it; and when you are once in his toils, he will be very careful how he lets you out. Bear in mind, as has already been suggested, that you are "passing through an enemy's country," and eternal vigilance only can insure your safety. At every crook and corner, at every cross-road, at every spot where he can conceal himself, he will lie in ambush; from whence he will either let fly at you his fiery darts, or else he will come out with a smile, professing to be your friend, and propose to keep you company; but as soon as he gets an opportunity, he will plunge a dagger into your bosom.

2. *Resolutely resist temptation at the very outset*. If you begin to parley with it, you are already

more than half overcome. The devil is not omnipotent, neither are his wiles. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you;" but open your door and permit him to walk in, and then listen to what he has to say, and ten chances to one, he will gain his point. By his "much fair speech he will cause you to yield; and with the flattering of his lips," will, as it were, force you. It was because our mother Eve parleyed with the tempter, that she finally yielded and fell. If she had resisted him at the outset, and not lent her ear to his plausible reasoning, she had never plucked and ate the forbidden fruit, and thus brought "death into the world, and all our woe."

The moment, therefore, my friends, that you see any temptation or spiritual danger, resist it at once. You cannot trifle with it, any more than you can trifle with a lion in his den, or with fire in a powder-house. You cannot walk upon hot coals without burning your feet.

3. *Look to God to help you.* Here is your only source of strength. He will be a very present help in time of trouble and danger. Trust in Him, and no weapon formed against you shall prosper. If you trust to your own unaided strength to meet the dangers which threaten you,—to overcome the evil inclinations of your own hearts,—to resist the temptations of the world and the wiles and snares of the adversary, God will teach you your weak-

ness, as he did Peter, by permitting you to fall. But put your trust in Him, put on the gospel armor which he has prepared for you,—take the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and to come off victorious in the conflict. "Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

CHAPTER IV.

DECISION OF CHARACTER.

Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image which thou hast set up.
— DAN. 3: 18.

ALL my young friends have read the interesting history of three pious young men, who were once commanded by a wicked king to fall down and worship a senseless golden image ; and if they refused to do it, they should be thrown alive into a burning furnace of fire ! The reply of these young men to the king, I have taken as a motto for this chapter, because it is so perfect an illustration of the subject which I propose for your consideration,— *decision of character*. What a sublime spectacle is here presented to our view — three youths boldly standing up before the king, and telling him, that whatever the consequences might be to themselves, they would never consent to do what they knew to be wrong. They were ready to die, if need be, the most horrible of all deaths ; but nothing could influence them to dishonor God by worshipping that idol. Notice how boldly they speak before the haughty monarch.

"We are not careful," say they, "to answer thee in this matter." Be it known unto thee, O king, that we shall not worship that image. Burn us in yonder furnace if you will, but we shall not do it.

The history of these young men is not only extremely interesting in itself, but it is full of instruction to all, and especially to the young. It illustrates the importance and beauty of *decision of character*. In their case it rises to sublimity.

True decision of character is a rare quality. We read about it, we hear a great deal said about it; but we seldom see it fully carried out in practice. Its importance, I think, is not duly estimated. It is desirable for every one, and for all situations in life; but for none more than the young Christian. For the want of it, vast multitudes have been led away from the path of duty,—have yielded to evil influences,—brought themselves into trouble, and religion into disrepute. I would therefore direct your special attention to it at this time.

I shall in the *first* place explain what is meant by decision of character.

Decision of character is a quality which *leads its possessor to pursue, from fixed principle, a bold, steady, determined, persevering course to the accomplishment of an important end*. It is to be distinguished from several other things, which have gone by that name.

Decision of character is to be distinguished from *obstinacy*. The two are very often confounded. An obstinate man is a most unamiable and undesirable character. He makes up his mind that such or such a course is best, either for himself or others, or such and such opinions are correct; and whether right or wrong, it is impossible to adduce any arguments, however sound and logical, that will have the least influence upon him whatever. He knows that he is right, and everybody else *must* be wrong who does not agree with him. No matter how much light you pour into his mind, or bring before it; it is all darkness to him. It is of no use to argue with him, — his mind is not open to conviction, and he is determined it shall not be. He would not yield to proof equivalent to a mathematical demonstration :

“A man convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still.”

And the reason is, he has not come to his conclusions, and adopted his course, from a calm and candid process of reasoning; but from prejudice, or, more frequently, from a sort of disdain he has of thinking and acting like other people. Such a man generally prides himself on his independence, and great “decision of character.” Poor, self-deluded creature! His fancied “decision of

character" is nothing but sheer obstinacy,—a quality that deserves and receives the contempt, rather than the respect of mankind. A man ought always to keep his mind open to conviction. His opinions, or the course of conduct he has marked out for himself, may possibly be wrong, and if so, he ought to be willing to be convinced of it. For a person to adhere to a course, pertinaciously, for no assignable reason but because he is determined to have his own way, is the mark of a weak mind rather than of a great one.

Decision of character should be distinguished also from *pride of consistency*. The ancient Medes and Persians would not alter or change their laws, for that would imply, as they supposed, weakness and inconsistency. The rulers themselves would contrive various methods to have their own enactments evaded or nullified. Ahasuerus issued a decree that on a given day all the Jews in his domains should be destroyed; but when, a little time after, he saw the folly and injustice of that decree, he did not repeal it,—he had too much pride to do that,—but he took special pains that it should be evaded, by arming the Jews, and bidding them stand on the defensive. Nebuchadnezzar enacted several laws that he was sorry for; but he would not repeal nor relax them, because that would imply that he had been injudicious, and would represent him as inconsis-

tent with himself. The same principle is often illustrated in the case of editors of newspapers. Having said a thing, some editors will stick to it, right or wrong. It should be remembered that persistency in any course does not necessarily imply firmness, or great decision of character.

A man of true decision of character is one who calmly, deliberately, and faithfully examines a subject or a course of conduct, for the purpose of learning what is truth, and what is duty; and having made up his mind what is right, he inflexibly conforms his life to his principles. When he commences a course, he adheres to it, and prosecutes it so long as he conscientiously believes it to be duty, without regard to fear or favor. Duty, not impulse, or self-will, or pride of consistency, is the corner-stone of his inflexibility. He does not consider himself infallible. His mind is open to conviction. He is willing to receive light from any source, and if he is convinced that he is wrong, he has independence to say so, and instantly change his course, right in face of a frowning world if need be. It sometimes requires more decision and firmness of character to change a course of action, than it does to pursue it. He is willing to change, if duty requires it, but not without. He is not "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive!" You

cannot persuade him to act inconsistently with his convictions of duty. He is not intimidated by popular opinion. The opinion of the world has no more influence upon him, in changing his course, than it has upon the wind, so long as he conscientiously believes he is in the way God would have him go. It makes no difference who tempts him, or what motives are laid before him to swerve from what he believes to be right. He replies, "I do not wish to offend you, or appear obstinate; but if you wish to dissuade me from duty, or lead me to do wrong, I am not careful to answer you in this matter; be it known unto you, and to all the world, that I cannot do violence to my conscience, and disobey God. The world may laugh, and the world may frown, but it will make no difference. I believe I ought to do thus and so; and thus I shall do. I have planted my foot, and I shan't take it up again till I am convinced that it is wrong; and then I will change."

This is true decision of character; — a *consistent adherence to fixed principles*, based upon a *faithful examination of truth*.

I shall now,

Secondly, Consider the importance of this trait of character, both as it relates to the common affairs of life, and to religion.

So far as our intercourse with mankind is con-

cerned, it is much the *easiest* way of getting through the world for a man to have a mind of his own. There are in society nearly as many different opinions on some subjects, as there are individuals. To attempt to please all, is a certain way to please nobody. To mark out a course that shall be universally popular, is as impossible as it would be to create a new world. A man, to get along in society comfortably to himself, must have a good degree of independence. In small matters, where no point of duty is involved, he ought, doubtless, often to yield his own taste and preference to others; but in no case ought he to surrender an important principle. If he does, he may be certain of getting himself into difficulty. If he does it *once*, he will have to do it again, and there will be no stopping-place. In the common affairs of life, how much easier it is for a man to get along who has some decision, or independence of character. A person who has none, will always be the sport of designing men: he will never know what to do. One man will tell him to do this, another will advise to a different course, and a third to a different still. His mind is constantly in a state of doubt. Sometimes he is inclined to go this way, and sometimes that; and there are not wanting those who will take advantage of this vacillating state of mind to increase his perplexity, by making to him suggestions, and giving

him advice, which he has not strength of purpose or independence sufficient either to follow or reject; and he becomes like "a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed."

But a man who learns to think for himself, and act for himself, avoids all this difficulty. The world will very soon learn a man's character, and will deal with him accordingly. If he is "unstable as water," they will always be troubling him; but if he has a mind of his own, and is governed by principle, they will soon find it out, and will keep at a respectful distance, and will not expect to influence him without good and substantial reasons.

It is not only the easiest, but it is the most *honorable* way of getting through the world, to be independent and decided. A man who has no decision of character will find it impossible to be consistent with himself, and to keep all his engagements. In his intercourse with mankind, he will often come in contact with persons of directly opposite opinions and practices.

Now, unless he has character and resolution to think for himself, he will be likely to fall in with both parties. In what a ridiculous and unworthy aspect he presents himself! Here he is, agreeing with one man to-day, with another of very different views to-morrow, and with a third the next day, different from both, perhaps; and very likely

with each he has committed himself to some opinion or course of action.

Now, there is much that is dishonorable in such indiscriminate coincidence with everybody, whatever may be the subjects agitated, whether politics, property, law, or religion. You never know where to find such a man, for this plain reason,—he is nowhere to be found. The only honorable course for a person to take in his intercourse with men in this world, is to have established principles, and let them be known, and to abide by them both in conversation and practice.

It is also the *safest* way. A man who has no decision is always liable to get into difficulty. Without designing it, he will be likely to become involved in a labyrinth of contradictions. He is inconsistent with himself; and although he does not notice it, others will. They will place the opinions he expressed yesterday, and those he expresses in different company to-day, side by side; and it will appear that they are wholly irreconcilable. He is thus in danger of losing his reputation, not only for sound judgment, but for veracity. Many a man who designed to be truthful and honest, has nearly or quite lost his reputation for integrity for the want of a little decision of character. By endeavoring to become "all things to all men," he has become nothing to anybody; and all confidence in him is lost. This

is a dangerous, quarrelsome, fault-finding world ; and if a man would steer safely through it, he must go straight forward.

Again, to be decided in our opinions, plans, and course of conduct, is the way *to secure success in our undertakings*. A man of decision of character will not be likely to engage in anything of importance without first having made it a subject of deliberation, and submitted it to the dictates of a cool judgment. Having once settled it in his mind that a particular course is expedient, he goes forward with an inflexibility of purpose to accomplish something, uninfluenced by the opinions or dictation of weak or designing men ; and generally he succeeds.

But decision of character is of the greatest importance when taken in connection with the subject of *religion*. If a man cannot get along comfortably in the affairs of this world without it, he certainly cannot in what pertains to another. In the *first* place, no person *can become a Christian* without it to some extent. Religion consists in renouncing the world, and taking a consistent, decided stand for God and the truth. How can a person do this without decision of character ? There are often more obstacles in the way of becoming a Christian, than in doing anything else whatever. There is not unfrequently opposition to stem, ridicule to encounter, reproach to endure,

temptation to resist ; and unless a person has a good degree of independence and decision, these difficulties will never be overcome, but will forever separate between him and heaven.

In the *second* place, without decision of character a person can never *grow in grace* after he becomes a Christian. The difficulties which he has to encounter when he commences the Christian course, will, some of them at least, attend him through life. The battle is not fought when a person first enlists in the Lord's army. There is usually a little skirmishing to begin with ; but generally the heat of the contest is not till some time afterward. To be good soldiers of the Lord Jesus, my friends, you must be decided, resolute, and persevering. There is to be no wavering, no timidity, no shrinking back ; but you must march right up to the enemy, face to face, and let him understand that you are prepared to *die* rather than to desert your post, or yield him one inch of ground. Instead of yielding, you must be determined to go forward. You are to set your faces as a flint against every temptation to wrong, and go onward in the divine life, and become more holy every day, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. One great reason why Christians do not grow in grace more than they do, is, they have not sufficient decision of character to say no, and to stick to it, whenever tempted to sin.

Once more, decision of character is necessary for all who would *be instrumental in advancing the cause of Christ* in the world. A decided man, and especially one who is decided in religion, makes a deep impression on the community. The world is led to conclude that there is a reality in religion, or he would not adhere to it so pertinaciously, nor take so bold a stand in its defence and advancement. It is probable that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did more for the honor of God and the cause of piety, by their firmness and decision, when their religious principles were put to the test before Nebuchadnezzar and his princes and subjects, when required to worship the golden image, than they did during the rest of their lives. Had they yielded, and fallen only *once* before the idol, they would have given decisive evidence that they did not fear their God as much as they did the face of man; and what would those idolaters then have thought of their religion? It is just so now. My friends, if you would have the world think anything of the religion of Christ, you must show them that you place a high value upon it yourselves, by taking a bold, decided stand for its defence and advancement in all circumstances whatsoever. Be decided in your *principles*, and let the devotees of the world know what your principles are. Don't be ashamed to let them know that you and

they worship different gods. Be decided in your practice. Carry out your principles. Principles without practice only excite contempt: they are worse than good for nothing. Don't be deterred from taking a decided, straightforward course for fear the world will laugh at you, and charge you with bigotry, Puritanism, and all that. You may be sure that the world will laugh at you behind your backs if you do *not* do it, and charge you with weakness and hypocrisy. By bowing down to the world's idols, you may for a moment gain their smiles and flatteries; but in their hearts they will despise you for it, and pour contempt upon your religion.

If, therefore, my young Christian friends, you would pursue the easiest, safest, and most successful course through this world; if you would make any *advances* in the divine life, and recommend religion to the world, I would earnestly advise you to two things,—first, adopt right principles; secondly, *stick to them*.

CHAPTER V.

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.—GEN. 2: 18.

THESE words were spoken in relation to Adam in Paradise. They have generally been interpreted to mean that it was not good for Adam—including also all mankind—to live single, or in an unmarried state. This was certainly true in regard to Adam, and it is doubtless true of mankind generally. But this interpretation does not express the full meaning of the passage. The words imply a great deal more. They refer to the social nature of man. He was made for society,—not conjugal society merely, but for social intercourse with either or both sexes. It is a part of man's constitution that he should associate with his species. Seclusion and solitude are unnatural, and as injurious as they are unnatural. The mind of man is so constituted that it must have society, or it would lose the balance of its powers, and become, to a greater or less extent, deranged. Those relig-

ionists, therefore, who think to serve God by shutting themselves up away from the world, in monasteries, nunneries, and lonely cells, have mistaken both the word of God, and the constitution of the mind. This principle of sociability has its origin in *God himself*. He exists in three persons, or in three distinctions, the nature of which has never been revealed to us, and has thus existed from eternity. God was not without society previous to his creation of angels and other intelligent beings. The Trinity—a very proper term to designate this mysterious, incomprehensible union—are represented as holding converse, and consulting with each other in regard to the creation and disposal of man. The principle of sociability pervades all animated nature. We see it among the lower, as well as the higher orders of creation,—in birds, beasts, and fishes, as well as in intelligent beings. Nature, therefore, as well as the word of God, teaches us, that it is not good for mankind to live without society. Persons are often thrown together necessarily in the way of business; but something more than this is demanded by the social principle. We need to meet together for the interchange of thought, and for stimulating each other's minds by conversation. This natural tendency of persons to associate with each other, should not be frowned upon, and con-

demned, but encouraged. There is great advantage to be derived from social intercourse; not only between persons of the same sex, but — under proper regulations and restrictions — between the different sexes. Such intercourse ever has characterized, and ever will characterize refined Christian society. To interdict it, would be to take a long step toward barbarism. Social intercourse should be regarded in the light of Christian duty, to be regulated by Christian principle like all other duties. It may be turned to very great advantage, and made highly conducive to our happiness and usefulness; and on the other hand, it may be so abused as to be productive of the greatest evils.

In addressing my young friends on this subject, I shall

First, Speak briefly of some of the benefits of social intercourse; and

Secondly, Give some directions by which it should be conducted.

Among the benefits of social intercourse, I would mention, first, *enjoyment*. Although this is by no means the most important object we should have in view when friends and neighbors meet, yet it is generally the first impelling motive to bring them together. There is a high degree of pleasure derived from conversing and associating with those whom we esteem and love. This

happiness is generally the greatest when we have intercourse with our nearest kindred. Providence has wisely so ordered it, that generally we love our nearest relations best, and take the most interest in their society. But there are always others, in every civilized community, whose society affords us much enjoyment, and we are attracted to them by a sort of instinct. We all know how pleasant it is amid the labors, the anxieties, and perplexities of life, to unbend the mind by intelligent conversation with our neighbors and friends. We feel our spirits enlivened, and the world, which was beginning to look gloomy, is again lighted up by a ray of sunshine. This is a rational kind of happiness, and one it is the good pleasure of God we should enjoy.

Secondly. Another benefit of social intercourse is, it *refines the manners*. To be rough, awkward, coarse, and vulgar in our deportment, may not be sinful, yet it comes pretty near it, for it impairs our influence in society. Influence is one of the talents with which God has intrusted us, and we are bound to use it to the best advantage. We have no right to throw it away, nor unnecessarily diminish it. On the other hand, we ought by all lawful and honorable means to increase it, that we may use it as an instrument in promoting the greatest good of society. I need not say that, other things being equal, persons of cultivated

tastes and manners, exert a greater influence over their fellow-men than those who are destitute of refinement, — clownish and coarse. If, therefore, attention to this matter will enable us to do more good, then it becomes a duty, and *inattention* to it, to say the least, comes pretty near being sinful. But, at any rate, a certain degree of refinement and attention to the forms of politeness observed by well-bred, intelligent society, is certainly very desirable, whether it be regarded in the light of a duty or not, and is not unworthy the regard of any Christian.

Now there is nothing more directly adapted to grind off the roughness of the externals of a person's character and appearance than social intercourse. Without society, mankind would grow up much like the wild beasts. A *hermit* can never be a gentleman. He may have within himself all the elements of one, but he needs intercourse with his fellow-men to develop what he is capable of becoming. The diamond, as it is found in nature, is an ill-shapen, uninteresting pebble ; you can't grind it, you can't file it, you can't shape it by any tool that was ever made. You can develop its beauties, shape and polish it only by bringing it in contact with other diamonds. It takes a diamond to cut a diamond.

So mankind are by nature rude and coarse, and whatever elements there may be in them of refine-

ment, nothing will ever *develop* these elements but coming in contact with others, and holding intercourse with their own species.

Thirdly. Social intercourse is useful because it excites in mankind a *mutual interest in each other*. No community can be happy and prosperous where every individual is bound up in self. A man who says, "I care for nobody, and desire to have nobody care for me," is a pitiable and despicable being. Were all mankind such, friendship and love would be banished from the world. God made us to care for one another, and not for ourselves alone. Who would like to live in a community where neighbors felt no interest in each other any farther than they could turn their intercourse to some selfish advantage? And yet there are such neighborhoods; but very certain I am they are not where the inhabitants are in the habit of frequently meeting together for friendly conversation.

Fourthly. Social intercourse tends to *enlarge and improve* the mind. Our minds are like a cutting instrument—sometimes they get dull and rusty. They need rubbing up and sharpening, and nothing will do this more effectually than attrition with other minds. If you rub two rusty and dull knives together, they act reciprocally; they brighten and sharpen each other. So will two minds when brought in contact. By

an interchange of opinions and feelings, by asking questions and making suggestions and communicating information, they stimulate each other and draw each other out, and mutually add to their stock of knowledge. Thus is the mind enlarged, its views are expanded, and its latent powers developed.

And *Finally*, social intercourse *tends to improve the heart*. When it is conducted as it ought to be, it softens down the asperities of our nature, it awakens sympathy for our species, and calls forth all our kindly feelings. It is adapted to make a person an obliging neighbor, a kind friend, and a more benevolent Christian. There is hardly anything better adapted to awaken and keep alive Christian feeling among the disciples of Christ than a frequent and free interchange of thought, especially on the subject of religion. The social principle was well understood by saints in ancient times. We read of their often being together, "stirring up one another's pure minds." "They who feared the Lord spake often one to another." Thus it always has been, and thus it always will be. The hearts of Christians are like coals of fire; — separate them, they will burn very feebly or go out; bring them together, and they will kindle up into a brighter and more fervid glow.

Having spoken of some of the benefits of social

intercourse when properly conducted, I shall now proceed to give directions for its regulation. The *first* thing demanding attention in order that social intercourse may be profitable is, the *choice of associates*. It is difficult to realize how much is depending upon this particular. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." In selecting your companions, my young friends, you must use a great deal of discrimination. Your most *intimate* friends should be those who can sympathize with you in your religious views and feelings. One of Satan's most successful devices for hindering young Christians in their race is, to get them under the influence of thoughtless, worldly companions. If you associate familiarly with any who are not Christians, as doubtless you often will, let it be with those, and those only, who treat religion and its ordinances with respect. If any one courts your society who makes light of serious things, who speaks lightly of revivals, who ridicules the anxious sinner, who profanes the Sabbath and its ordinances, or the name of God, let me say to you, as you value your soul, and as you love the cause of Christ, *have nothing to do* with such a person as a companion. No sooner admit him to your confidence, or place his name on the list of your chosen friends, than you would press a rattlesnake to your bosom. Shun his

society as you would the pestilence. Choose your select companions from those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways, and if you associate with others, let it be with those who are correct in principle, and who respect you none the less, but rather more, because you are a Christian, and who will never wound your feelings by speaking lightly of, or in any way treating with disrespect, your best friend,— the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having carefully selected your society, let your social intercourse with your friends, whether it is in private, or in the social circle, be such as becomes intelligent, well-bred Christians. In the *first* place, let it be *decorous*, whether you are in company with persons of your own or the other sex. When I say it should be decorous, I mean it should be opposed to anything like vulgarity, either in language or manner. Vulgarity is always inexcusable. It is a *shamé* and *à disgrace* to anybody, but especially to a Christian. Persons who have not been much in society, are excusable for a certain degree of awkwardness and rusticity of manner; but they are not excusable for being *vulgar*. In social intercourse there should be no rudeness of manner or address; no calling of nicknames; no foolish jesting; no loud and boisterous talking or laughing, though it is not by any means wrong to laugh if you laugh respectably; no telling indecent or foolish stories; no gossip; and espe-

cially no backbiting. All these things betray a vulgar mind, unworthy of a gentleman or a lady, and much less a Christian.

In the *second* place, social intercourse should be characterized by *politeness*. By politeness I do not mean those forms of etiquette, that punctiliousness of manner and ceremony, which a certain portion of the gay world assume, and which is taught in Parisian dancing-schools, by any means ; but I mean a sincere, kind, and respectful treatment of one another ; a tender regard to each other's wishes ; a willingness to waive your own pleasure and convenience for the sake of promoting that of others ; a self-sacrificing spirit ; the avoidance of everything in conversation or action that can give unnecessary pain. True politeness does not consist so much in *polish* of manner as it does in kindness of manner. A good definition of it is, "true benevolence carried out in little things," in our intercourse with mankind. Some persons seem to think that it is necessary for them to be polite only to their superiors, or those with whom they are not on terms of intimacy. When among their equals, and especially those whom they meet every day, they seem to think that they can speak to them roughly and treat them rudely, and do and say a thousand things which they would be ashamed of in company where they were less familiar. But politeness, — I don't mean stiff for-

mality — should be shown to everybody ; not only to our superiors, but also to our equals and inferiors. It is a Christian duty. It should be observed between brothers and sisters in the family ; it should be observed between play-mates ; it should be observed in all our social intercourse at home and abroad ; between those who are our nearest and most intimate friends, as well as any others. It was a direction of the apostle, "be courteous," which means the same thing as, be polite. And he set the example.

In the *third* place, let your social intercourse be *improving*. It should improve the mind and the heart. When persons meet together in a social way, the object should not be merely to while away a passing hour. That is wasting time, and time is too precious to waste. You had better, a great deal, throw your gold and silver into the ocean, and your bank-notes into the fire, than to throw away your time. I have said that *enjoyment* is one of the benefits of social intercourse ; but even enjoyment is not best promoted by unmeaning, vain, light, and profitless talk ; on the contrary, the more improving we make our intercourse with each other, the greater the pleasure it will afford. When you meet, my young friends, whether in the social circle or in a more private way, your conversation should not be all *commonplace* ; but let it be ever your aim

to say or to hear something useful. Talk about the last book you have read, — for I trust you all make it a point to have a useful book on hand, and to read something in it every day; mention any new fact in science, or in the arts, that may have come to your knowledge through the newspapers, or otherwise. Without entering into the arena of partisan politics, it would be well for you to notice and speak of the civil and political movements of the world, foreign nations as well as our own. Analyze and discuss the characters of leading public men, both of ancient and modern times; read and make yourselves familiar with the constitution of your State and of your country, so that when you talk of matters of a public nature, you may talk instructively and intelligently. Be in the habit of asking each other questions on subjects of importance. If persons would pursue some such course as this, and try to turn their conversation to good account, instead of talking about the fashions and frivolities of the day, they would in a little time be astonished at their own mental improvement, and at the amount of useful information they had acquired.

But your social intercourse should aim to the improvement of the heart as well as the intellect. When you meet, my young friends, you should endeavor to make each other *better* as well as wiser. There is much danger that your conversa-

tion in your intercourse will be too exclusively on subjects pertaining to this world. Religion is among Christians quite too often thrust into the background, as appropriate only to the Sabbath, or the social prayer-meeting; whereas, in every social gathering, as well as in private conversation, it should have its due place. I do not mean that it is expedient, or proper, to rudely interrupt general conversation by thrusting in the subject of religion without regard to persons, time, and circumstances. Such a course will disgust those you wish to benefit. But watch your opportunity, and if your heart is in the work, you will nearly always find a place where a few words may be spoken on the subject of religion, which would be edifying to Christians, and would not appear rude to worldly minds, while it would benefit your own soul. It keeps the heart warm to speak about Christ and his salvation. Always be ready, therefore, to introduce the subject of religion as a theme of remark in your intercourse with each other. If you are sincere Christians, you are fellow-pilgrims to the heavenly country. What can be more natural, or more proper, than that you should converse with each other freely about the land whither you are going, and the road that conducts to it? It is always interesting to the Christian to hear about the progress of Christ's kingdom. You should always, when you

meet a Christian friend, be ready to communicate to him or to her, any interesting intelligence you may have received in regard to the great moral and religious movements of the day. Talk about the missionary enterprise; and that you may communicate as well as receive valuable information, make yourselves familiar with the efforts that have been made, and that are being made, to convert the world to Christ. This is an enterprise of far greater interest and importance than the spanning of the Atlantic with the telegraph-wire, or constructing a ship-canal across the Isthmus, or tunneling the Hudson, and should make every Christian's heart thrill with a holy pleasure. Talk about revivals, their progress, and the means of their promotion. Talk about the Sabbath school, the Bible, and other religious books. Talk about experimental religion,—not theoretically, merely, but practically. Tell how you have felt and how you feel now. Call out the feelings of your brethren. Often compare your Christian experiences. Acquaint each other with your Christian joys and sorrows, your hopes and fears, your spiritual conflicts, your victories and defeats. By such kind of conversation you may be assured the heart will be made better; it will be kept from being absorbed by worldliness; its sympathies and heavenly aspirations will be kept alive; and you will very much encourage and strengthen

each other in your journey heavenward ; and you will enjoy it.

The particular design of this chapter, thus far, has been to discuss the subject of social intercourse, when you come together for the sake of society, and not for religious worship. The social prayer-meeting is altogether distinct ; and with a few remarks on this subject I shall close.

When you meet together for prayer, my young friends, you should feel, and should deport yourselves, very different in many respects, from what would be perfectly proper in a visiting circle. While the social principle operates to render the prayer-meeting more interesting, the design of coming together is not to enjoy intercourse with one another as friends, but to hold fellowship with God, and to offer unto him united prayer and praise. On these solemn and interesting occasions, which you ought by all means to attend, your thoughts should not be fixed on secular matters, or on each other, but on God. Call home your wandering imaginations, and feel that your special business is with your Maker. You may indeed speak to each other "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs ;" and "exhort one another," and "stir up one another's pure minds by way of remembrance ;" but all with one great object in view, and that should be, the devout, spiritual worship of Jehovah. In going to and from the

social prayer-meeting, your conversation and deportment should be characterized by sobriety, and be not at all discordant with the object for which you assemble. Think how you would feel, and what you would say to each other, were you going to meet the Saviour in his bodily presence, and have personal conversation with him, face to face ; and also, what would be the tenor of your conversation after such an interview.

Finally, my young friends, let all your intercourse with each other, in all times and places, be such as shall prepare you for eternal fellowship in heaven. I hope that your intercourse, commenced on earth, will be perpetuated forever in the world of glory. The social principle exists there in all its perfection, and serves to enhance the blessedness of the righteous. While passing along together here, see that you do not hinder each other on the way ; but, on the contrary, strive to help each other onward ; and let your social and Christian intercourse during your pilgrimage be such as shall afford you a theme of delightful reminiscence to all eternity.

CHAPTER VI.

FORMATION OF HABITS.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.—JER. 13 : 23.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—PROV. 22 : 6.

THESE two passages of scripture are suggestive of several important truths worthy of our attention, and among them may be mentioned the power of habit. A person who has long accustomed himself to an evil course of conduct, has acquired a *habit* of sinning which has become inveterate; and it is almost as easy for an Ethiopian to change his skin or a leopard his spots, as for him to stop sinning and become a virtuous man. And so, on the other hand, if in early life he is trained up in the path of virtue, he will acquire a habit of right doing which will attach to him down to old age, or as long as he lives.

We hence learn the immense importance of the formation of right habits. We know what habit is, from observation and experience. Habit is a *state of the mind, or body, which tends to the repeti-*

tion, involuntarily, of the same bodily or mental act. It is the result of custom. It differs from custom in this respect. Custom is the repetition of an act by particular design; habit is the result of that custom: that is, the act, in consequence of being often repeated, at length comes to be performed without any calculation or immediate forethought; and the force of habit sometimes becomes so strong, that the act is performed without knowing it. This is illustrated in the case of the profane swearer. The boy, or the young man, especially he who has been religiously or morally educated, takes his first oath with deliberation and considerable hesitancy. He knows what he is doing, and it requires a struggle to break through the barriers which education and parental influence had thrown around him, to utter an oath. But he does it, and having done it once, he does it a second time with fewer misgivings; but still, it requires an effort for him to swear. By persevering, however, custom makes it easier for him to break the third commandment; till at length he does it without thinking of it, and then he has formed the habit.

The intemperate man goes through a similar process, till at length he finds himself going to his bottle as it were involuntarily. His habit gets the control of him, and usurps the place of reason.

All men have their habits. Dr. Paley says,

"Man is a bundle of habits." We have our habits of eating, our habits of sleeping, our habits of speaking, our habits of thinking, our habits of labor, our habits of recreation; in short, we have our habits for almost everything. If we accustom ourselves to take our meals at some particular hour of the day, no matter what, we shall find our appetites returning at that hour. And so of our desire for sleep. If for a number of times we retire at a particular hour for rest, we soon form a habit that will be sure to prompt us without our recurring to our time-piece. And if we accustom ourselves to be awaked from sleep at any given hour, we soon acquire a habit of awaking at that hour of ourselves, involuntarily. We acquire the habit of using certain forms of expression, sometimes vulgar expressions, sometimes ungrammatical, or in bad taste, and do not know it till a friend points it out to us.

Our habits become incorporated into our very being; we do not realize to what extent we are under their influence. They determine in a great measure our character. They have an influence upon all we do. When our habits become confirmed, they are almost omnipotent. If our habits are good, they are most powerful auxiliaries to preserve us in the paths of virtue. They help us resist temptation, and render easy and pleasant what would otherwise be difficult and painful. If

our habits are bad, they will be likely to exert a controlling influence over us for evil. They become like a chain riveted around our necks, and to break away from them, is impossible without a desperate effort. Almost as well may the "Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots."

The tendency to form habits is a part of our constitution, and God created it for wise and benevolent purposes, although it is capable of great abuse. It rests with ourselves whether habit shall be an engine of good or evil. Good habits are invaluable in helping us to be useful, and in leading a virtuous life; whereas bad habits so completely gain the ascendancy in a wicked man, that they will lead him on from bad to worse, and cause him to perpetrate crimes, almost without knowing it, which would once have caused him to shudder. Hence we see the importance of giving our attention to this subject in early life, for it is in youth that the greatest number of our habits are formed, and when formed, they will be likely to attach to us while we live. They steal upon us insensibly; many are formed without the least reflection whatever, particularly bad habits. Bad habits are like weeds in a garden; they come up and grow of themselves, and unless we are on the watch, the first we know, the ground is *full* of them. *Good* habits are like our choice vegetables and flowers. In the first place, they *need plant-*

ing, and then the most tender and assiduous culture is requisite to keep them growing, and to prevent their being overrun by what is useless and noxious. Good habits can be formed by any one, but they require much pains and patient perseverance; whereas, to form bad habits requires no pains or patience at all. Nothing more is necessary but to let the natural heart have its own way for a little while, and they will become as numerous as the spears of grass under our feet.

There are two aspects in which this subject presents itself for our consideration.

First, the importance of guarding against the formation of *bad habits*.

Secondly, the desirableness of forming good ones.

Under the first of these heads, I shall specify a few bad habits, quite common, against which all, and young people especially, should be on their guard.

1. There is the habit of *carelessness*,—a habit which, wherever it exists, is a source of great inconvenience, and sometimes of very great evil, both to the individual who is addicted to it, and to all who have anything to do with him. How many millions of lives have been lost, and fortunes sacrificed to the habit of carelessness! Nearly all of what are called accidents on our railroads and steamboats are attributable to this alone. Of the

buildings that are burned, with the exception of those which are set on fire by fiends in human shape, ninety-nine out of one hundred are fired by carelessness. How often is it that we hear of some terrible disaster, involving the most terrific loss of life and property, all the results of carelessness ; collision of vessels at sea, and running upon reefs, collisions of railroad trains, the upsetting of carriages, the fright and running of horses, the explosion of steam-engines, powder-mills, magazines, and fire-arms, the falling of timbers at the raising of buildings, the drowning of persons when bathing, and on other occasions ! We have no idea of the amount of life and property destroyed by this one habit, carelessness. Suppose we could particularly examine all of what are called accidents or casualties which result in the loss of life, limb, or property, and learn their minute history, what a large proportion should we be able to trace back to the carelessness of somebody, as their origin ! A large proportion of the diseases that affect the community originate in carelessness. Persons thoughtlessly expose themselves to a draught of air, or to the dews of evening, or go unprotected from a warm atmosphere to a cold one ; a severe cold is the consequence, and dangerous sickness and perhaps death supervenes. It would be easy to multiply examples illustrating the evils resulting from carelessness ; and yet how little is thought

of it! It is nothing more nor less than a *habit* formed in early life, and it is a habit seldom entirely broken. A careless person remains a careless person usually through life.

This, therefore, is one pernicious habit which youth should guard against with great assiduity. It is a moral and religious duty to do so.

Another habit to be shunned is *the use of stimulating drinks and drugs*. In these days of light and reform on the subject of temperance, it would seem as if little need be said on the subject of forming the habit of drinking intoxicating liquors; for it is to be presumed, or ought to be, that the use of them is laid aside entirely, except for medicinal or mechanical purposes, especially by all who call themselves Christians. In former times, when spirituous liquors as a beverage were regarded not only *innocent* but beneficial, habits of drinking were formed unconsciously, which often ended in intemperance. By taking a little now and then with a friend, or a glass of bitters before breakfast to improve the appetite, or at eleven or three o'clock, to give strength (as was then erroneously supposed) to sustain the burden and heat of the day, persons of the most respectable standing in society often fell into the habit of going regularly to the bottle, till at length they became confirmed inebriates. And it is a wonder that all did not become so. Although there is a great and favor-

able change in the opinions and the customs of the community in respect to the use of intoxicating drinks in our times, yet the danger is not all past. There are persons still, in almost every place, who are dropping into the ranks of the intemperate, and others who are taking lessons in the preparatory school of drunkenness, and who will ultimately graduate in the gutter. There are those who use strong drink, they think solely as a medicine, when in fact it is only to satisfy the craving of an appetite which will be satisfied with nothing else. They began using it as a "medicine," and perhaps as a necessary medicine; but they did not discontinue it when no longer needed. They have formed a habit to which they have already become slaves, and there is much reason to fear it will land them in the drunkard's grave. The greatest caution should be observed in the use of intoxicating drinks, even for necessary purposes; for like a subtle enemy, it will, while performing the offices of kindness and friendship, slip a snare around its victim, and ere he is aware of his danger, drag him down to ruin!

Be careful then, my young friends, how you meddle with them. Shun them as you would poison,—treat them exactly as you do poison. Place the two side by side in your medicine-case, and resort to them in case of necessity, and at no other time; and when the necessity ceases to exist,

do not think of taking a sip of your alcoholic drink any sooner than you would of your solution of arsenic or corrosive sublimate.

This is the safe, and the only safe way to avoid that habit which has destroyed countless multitudes, and has sent desolation and woe into thousands and hundreds of thousands of families.

There is a habit extensively prevailing in almost all communities of using poisonous drugs as well as drinks. Opium in its crude state, or in some of its preparations, is used habitually by a vast many where it is not suspected, especially among females, and is accomplishing its slow but sure work of undermining the constitution, and weakening the powers of the intellect, and shortening life.

But the habit that prevails more extensively probably than any other in the world, is the use of tobacco. It is a habit confined to no community, and to no class or order of society. It prevails among the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the bond and the free, the wise (*i. e.*, those who are wise on other subjects) and the foolish, old and young, male and female, legislators, lawyers, doctors, clergymen (to their shame be it spoken), presidents and professors in our colleges and seminaries, proprietors, agents, journeymen and apprentices in our manufactories and shops, farmers, merchants,

clerks, schoolmasters, and school-boys! Multitudes pertaining to all these classes of society, in every continent, nation, state, county, town, and neighborhood under heaven, have surrendered their liberties, and avow themselves slaves to the habit of using tobacco! I am by no means disposed to place this habit, as some have done, on the same footing as the habit of using spirituous liquors. The moral character of the two habits is undoubtedly different in many respects. Neither am I going to deal out anathemas and severe censures upon those who have been so unfortunate (although it was by their own fault) as to get the chains of this habit riveted upon them. From my heart I sympathize with them in their slavery, and sincerely pity them. But I would, if in my power, say a word to my young friends to dissuade them from forming a habit so unnecessary, so inconvenient, so disagreeable to others, so expensive, and fraught with so many evils. Or, if they have begun to form the habit, I would implore them to break away from it instantly, before the chains are riveted upon them.

The use of this drug is certainly *unnecessary*. Physicians do not prescribe or recommend it, except as they do jalap, quassia, and ipecac, and other nauseating drugs, in some peculiar states of the health or constitution. There is not a respectable, well-read physician in the United States who

will tell you that tobacco, in either of the three forms in which it is used habitually,—smoking, chewing, and snuffing,—is necessary to persons in health for any purpose whatsoever. It is not necessary for comfort or happiness or respectability. All can be, and are, enjoyed far better without it.

As I do not purpose on this occasion to go minutely into the discussion of this subject, I pass over its inconvenience, its annoyance to others, its injurious effects upon the health and constitution, and will say a word or two on the *expensiveness* of the habit.

The amount of property annually annihilated by the habit of which I am speaking, is enormous. Said a gentleman, some years ago, who had paid much attention to this subject, "The annual cost of what goes off in tobacco smoke in these United States, cannot be less than thirty millions of dollars, and the amount expended for tobacco in other forms, more than five millions more; so that the expense for tobacco in this country is more than three hundred times as much as the revenue of the A. B. C. F. M." The amount consumed by *church-members* far exceeds the sum total of what is contributed for the spread of the gospel and sustaining the institutions of religion. The annual expense of tobacco for those who use it, especially in smoking, ranges individually anywhere from

five to one hundred dollars. Three cents a day would be considered a meagre allowance to a person of this class, and yet this amounts in one year to eleven dollars, within five cents. And yet how many young men, and boys even, expend much more than this, and think nothing of it! Suppose they were required to give that amount to benevolent purposes, or for the support of the gospel; they would say at once they could not possibly afford it. Let a young man spend six cents a day for cigars, and continue the practice for forty years, as he probably will, should he live so long, and at the end of that period the sum expended, with interest, will amount to \$3,373, — enough to buy a small farm!

Dr. Alcott of Boston says, "I have known many a poor family that consumed in smoking and chewing at least twenty-five cents a week; a mere trifle, not worth mentioning, they thought. This, in forty years," said he, "at compound interest, would amount to \$2,100." The city of New York consumes, it is computed, twenty thousand dollars a day on cigars, and less than half of that for bread. A writer from England says: "By a return recently issued, it is shown that the duty on tobacco, in one year, in the United Kingdom, was \$25,000,000. In London alone, the duty received was \$10,000,000. It reads strangely of a highly professing Christian community, that they

spend four times as much in one year in a pernicious indulgence, such as the use of tobacco, as they do in the support of all the great philanthropic institutions for the spread of the Gospel through the earth, for the circulation of the Bible, and for the education of the poor. The mortality amongst the population of London, from diseases directly resulting from the use of tobacco, is appalling, and of this class of sufferers not a few are to be found among ministers of the Gospel."

Another English writer, who has made a careful computation of the amount of tobacco raised and used in the various nations and countries of the globe, comes to the conclusion that the expense is not much if any less than one dollar a year for every man, woman and child on the face of the earth,—one thousand millions. This sum would build two railroads around the globe at a cost of twenty thousand dollars per mile. It would employ a million of preachers, and another million of teachers, and give to each a salary of five hundred to a thousand dollars a year.

Thus, when we look merely at the *cost* of the habit of which I am speaking, is it not enormous? And unless something can be urged in favor of it more than has yet been advanced, is it not, to say the least, very *foolish* as well as *inexpedient* to contract the habit? I do sincerely believe the use of this drug is a great, prominent, crying evil

in our world, and that a reform is loudly called for. This, however, is almost entirely hopeless, so far as those who have been long addicted to the habit are concerned. You might just about as well undertake to change the skin of the Ethiopian, or the spots of the leopard, as to reform one who has been long wedded to his tobacco. Our only hope of success is with the young, and these I would affectionately and earnestly warn against this disagreeable, pernicious habit. I could say much more on this subject. Perhaps some of you may think I have said too much already, for I know the remarks I have made run directly athwart the practices of a large number who now read these lines,—not many of my young friends, I hope. But I could not say less, in fidelity to the youth for whose benefit these remarks are particularly designed.

There are a great many other bad habits, common in almost every community, which my limits will not permit me to discuss separately at the present time. I shall content myself by merely mentioning some of them, with a word of warning that my young friends may guard against them.

There is a habit some persons have of *gossiping*,—of going about town, and retailing from house to house evil reports against neighbors,—circulating tales of scandal in exaggeration of the truth.

There is a habit of *finding fault* with everybody and everything, in which some indulge, whatever may be the pains taken to please them.

There is the habit of *irritability*,—of yielding to a bad temper, and being easily provoked.

There is a habit which some get of *staying away* from religious meetings; and there is a habit which others have of *sleeping* when they do go.

There is a habit observable in some of *gazing about the church*, and giving their attention to anything but to what the preacher is saying.

There is a habit which some very good Christians get, of having *wandering thoughts in prayer*, both in public prayer and in the closet, which distresses them exceedingly, and leads them to cry out with tears, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"

Against these, and similar habits, my young friends, I would have you constantly on your guard. You will fall into them very easily, and if you should do so, they will be likely to gain the ascendancy over you to such a degree, that to break away from them will be almost as impossible as for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots.

I conclude this chapter with a friendly exhortation to you and myself. Since habits are so powerful, and so permanent in their influence, let

us assiduously form and cultivate *good* ones. Let us form the habit of thinking of God, and directing our thoughts to God the first thing when we wake in the morning; the habit of pouring out our souls to him in secret prayer; the habit of spending some portion of every day in reading the Bible, and other good books; the habit of family worship; the habit of attending the prayer-meeting, as well as the house of God on the Sabbath; the habit of giving attention when there; the habit of introducing religious conversation; the habit of self-denial; the habit of benevolence; the habit of often turning our thoughts to the great end and object of life; the habit of striving every day to serve God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength; and then we shall, by God's help, supplant all our *bad* habits, and thus shall we get our feet established in the way we should go, so that we shall never depart from it.

CHAPTER VII.

AMUSEMENTS.

A time to dance.—ECCL. 3:4.

VERY different views have been taken by mankind on the subject of amusement. Some appear to regard it as the great object and end of life. So far as we can judge from the course they pursue, they seem to think that man was made chiefly "to eat and to drink, and then rise up and play," and to enjoy the passing hour. Their constant aim is to divert the mind from everything serious, and keep the spirits buoyant and light by gay scenes and exhilarating pleasures. Another class of persons go to the opposite extreme. They take such views of man as an immortal being, hastening as he is to eternity, and knowing that he is here deciding the great problem whether he shall be happy or miserable forever, they think it unworthy of his high nature and destiny to bestow a thought upon earthly pleasure, or anything which has not direct reference to that eternity which is just before him. Hence, anything like amusement is proscribed by

them entirely, as being not only inappropriate to our condition, but as improper and positively sinful.

Now it must be conceded that the views of this latter class are far more rational than the former, for they have their origin in the most serious and important truths that ever came before the mind of man. It is indeed a most solemn thing to live in a world of probation, with an entire uncertainty when that probation will close. To think that heaven and hell are but a little before us, and that our residence in one or the other of these worlds forever is to be determined by us here, is sufficient to make any rational, candid mind thoughtful and serious. But yet this class of persons are mistaken in the views they entertain in regard to the means best adapted to secure an end. It is true that the great object of life is to prepare for eternity. But the question is, What means are best adapted to secure the end? Would the mind be in a better state; would the heart be more holy; would the gracious affections be more lively; would a person love and serve God any better, by keeping the attention fixed without any interruption on eternal things, and shutting out from the mind everything like pleasure or recreation? I think not. There is a class of religionists who suppose that to serve God faithfully they must have nothing to do with this

world at all,— especially with anything pleasant. Hence they lay aside everything that is adapted to make them cheerful and happy, and retire to a “cloister” or “nunnery,” to spend, as they profess to do, the whole of life in devotion. But that is not the way God has ordained for us to serve and glorify him. He created the mind, with all its faculties, and established for it fixed laws; and these laws cannot be violated without injury to the mental and moral constitution. God never intended that the mind should be forever fixed upon one object, or one *class* of objects. If this had been his design, he would have constituted the mind very differently from what he has, and he would have placed it in very different circumstances. He would not have created those susceptibilities to pleasure from worldly good which characterize every sentient being; neither would he have created such a world as this is, of so much beauty and attractiveness, and so exactly adapted in many of its features to engage the attention, please the taste, and divert the thoughts. Why do you suppose God made the flowers? and why so many of them, and in such rich variety? and why did he make them so beautiful in form, and paint them with such exquisite delicacy and richness of hue, and perfume them so sweetly? Was it not that they might attract the attention of man and afford him pleasure,— in other words, to amuse

him? It was for the same reason he created the birds of every variety of plumage, and set them all to music, so that they fill the world with their harmony. And so of animals, and insects, and creeping things, and fishes, and the landscape. Everything "God has made beautiful in his time." And why so beautiful? Why did he not make grasses and shrubs without flowers? Why did he not create all vegetation, and trees, and birds, and beasts, and insects, of one uniform color, or rather, of no color at all? Why did he diversify the earth with such varied and delightful scenery? Why did he make morning light, breaking in the east, so beautiful? and why did he deck the western sky at evening with curtains of gold and silver, and purple and crimson? Recreation is a divine institution. God has made it essential to the happiness and highest development of every order of sentient beings. Their nature demands it. It is necessary both to their health and happiness. We see this exemplified in the whole animal creation. Look at the birds and the insects, the fishes, and all the different varieties of animals. They by no means employ the whole of their time in seeking their food and the necessities of existence; but a portion of every day is spent in recreation. See the birds sporting among the branches, or performing their graceful evolutions in the air, the insects dancing in the

sunbeams, the flocks and herds, and our various domestic animals gamboling either alone or with each other,—all acting out the nature God has given them, in finding out some appropriate amusement. Deprive them of recreation, and they would cease to be happy; they would lose their vivacity, droop, and come to a premature end.

Recreation is as essential to man as it is to other animals, and indeed more so. The body needs it, and the mind especially needs it. The mind is so constituted that it must have it, or it will be both weakened and distorted. Religion, therefore, and the very highest type of religion, does not forbid a relaxation or diversion of the mind from severe studies, and things strictly spiritual, to those of a lighter character; in other words, amusements. Amusements are proper for all ages, and all classes of society; but at no period of life are they so much demanded as in childhood and youth. It has often been said that "the young will have their amusements, and we cannot help it if we try." This is all very true; they will have their amusements, and they ought to have them, and we don't wish to "help it." What we wish is, that they may have the right kind of amusement, in right proportion, and at the right time. It being conceded that mankind, and especially the young, need and must have amusements, our attention is naturally di-

rected to the inquiry, what kinds of amusement and recreation — for amusement and recreation mean nearly the same thing — are proper for rational and immortal beings? And here we find a great diversity of opinion. Some would give a very wide range, and permit those who want amusement to find it in almost any employment or pleasure which is not a downright, palpable violation of the express law of God. Others would restrict amusements to so few, and so tame recreations, that they might just about as well have none at all. In regard to this subject, as well as most others, truth, or propriety, lies between extremes. It would be well if we could find the happy and safe medium, although it must be confessed it is somewhat difficult to draw the line, with perfect distinctness, between those amusements which are innocent and expedient, and those which are improper and injurious.

We can, however, without difficulty, lay down some general principles, which I think will be a sufficient guide in most cases in regard to our choice of amusements, and the attention we should give them.

1. Amusements must be *interesting*. This follows from the very object we have in view. To get up something that has nothing in it to *interest* or *excite* the mind, and call it "amusement," is to misapply terms; and it is wholly useless, so far as the end contemplated is concerned.

2. They should be *healthful*. We have no right to trifle with our health, or do anything which we have reason to believe will impair it, unless it be something which is a positive duty. When duty calls, we may leave our health in the keeping of God, but it is tempting him to do so when we have nothing in view but pleasure.

3. They should be of *good*, or at least not *evil tendency*. They should not lead to dissipation, nor extravagance, nor to a waste of time, nor to unfit the mind for devotion.

4. They should be, as far practicable, *improving*.

5. They should be adapted to *age, sex, and circumstances*.

6. They should be *timely*. There are seasons when amusements which are in themselves perfectly innocent, would be entirely out of place and positively sinful. Amusements would be, of course, wrong on the Sabbath. And some kinds of innocent amusement would be out of place in time of revival, or in affliction, or in time of great public calamity.

Attention to these general principles will very much assist us in deciding what recreations are proper at suitable times. Perhaps, however, you would prefer that I should be a little more specific, and mention some particular kinds of amusements which may be regarded as proper or improper.

Among the various kinds which may be regarded as innocent and proper, I would mention ornamental gardening, drawing and painting, music (vocal and instrumental), reading (especially history, travels, biography, and poetry). I would not wholly proscribe works of fiction, although the greatest care should be taken in making a selection; for a large proportion of the novels of the present day are like confectionery flavored with prussic acid,—a substance pleasant to the taste, but one of the most deadly poisons. I would add the study of botany, mineralogy, geology, natural history of birds, beasts, fishes, and insects; the latter study aided by a microscope. In these studies, pursued not as a task, but simply as amusements, you will find a vast storehouse of interest and pleasure, sometimes extremely exciting.

For those who wish to combine exercise with amusement, there are athletic sports for boys and young men, such as gymnastic exercises, ball-playing, and other similar games, which, if conducted in kind feelings and with decorum, will answer the double purpose of innocent pleasure and exercise.

Young ladies may combine amusement with healthful exercise in the modern and excellent game of croquet with or without gentlemen partners, in calisthenics, riding horseback, in bo-

tanical excursions, ranging the fields and woods in search of wild-flowers, and the cultivation of flowers in the garden and conservatory. Within doors there is a great variety of ways in which they may amuse themselves and their friends, with the needle, crayon, and in many varieties of fancy and ornamental work, in which pleasure and utility are united.

Occasional parties of pleasure, in which both sexes participate, are both proper and desirable, if conducted with decorum. A riding party, a picnic party, a party for rambling in the green fields or woods, or up mountain slopes, or through flowery glades and dells, a party for sailing, fishing, sleighing, or skating,—each and every one of these, enlivened by polite, intelligent, cheerful conversation, may be innocently and profitably enjoyed. Such assemblages of young people, at proper times, are unobjectionable, unless suffered to degenerate (as they sometimes do) into rudeness, levity, and folly.

A great many innocent recreations might be added to this list. I have mentioned these as specimens of a class of amusements which may be enjoyed at proper times and places, by young people, and also by those of maturer years, without sin.

In this connection I will specify a few popular amusements belonging to the class of objectionable

pleasures and recreations, against which I would put my young friends on their guard.

The first I would mention is *theatrical* amusements. There are persons who call themselves respectable, who undertake to defend the theater; but I seldom have known a professed Christian do so, or at least one who gave evidence of eminent piety. It is asked, "What harm is there in the stage, provided it is under good and wholesome regulations; and provided also, no plays are acted but those of a good moral tendency?" But who, I ask in return, ever saw or ever heard of a theater conducted on these principles? There is not a theater in the country, and probably not one in the world, that would not become bankrupt in six months, were it conducted on sound moral and religious principles. The theater is, and ever has been, and there is no doubt will ever be, a school of vice of the worst kind, and is one of Satan's grand devices to undermine the principles of youth, and ripen them for perdition. In order to sustain itself, it finds it necessary to pander to the worst passions of our depraved nature, and the moment it ceases to do so, that moment it begins to lose patronage, and it ceases to pay. Besides the immoral tendency of many of its plays, it must have its immodest daughters of Herodias, its drinking saloons, and its third tier. A theater such as it should be, never existed (certainly not

for any length of time), and never will exist, except in the imagination. Repeated attempts have been made to reform the theater. Reform "Pandemonium!" Few things have done more to corrupt the principles of youth than the theater and its appendages. I would therefore caution you, my young friends, to shun its doors. It would be far better to have no amusement, than such as the modern playhouse would give you. It is very common for persons from the country, when they visit New York, Boston, or any other large city, especially for the first time, to go to the theater; and this is sometimes done by Christians who would blush to have it known at home that they had done so. They say to themselves, "It is only for once; I am a stranger here, and my influence is nothing, and I wish to see and judge for myself; nobody will ever know it." On the same principle might they visit the lowest sinks of vice in the city. It is by persons from the country that the theater is in a great measure supported. It is said by those best acquainted, that there is not a theatrical establishment in New York or Boston but would go down, were it not for country patronage. Remember, my young friends, that the eye of God is upon you, abroad as well as at home, and whenever the devil tempts you to do anything wrong, and suggests to you that "you are a stranger, and it will never be known," remember

that the time is coming when every "hidden thing shall be brought to light," and what is done in secret "shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops."

Another popular amusement, less objectionable, but still inexpedient, in the opinion of most good Christians, and productive of evil, is the amusement of the *ball-room* or dancing party. Much has been said in favor of dancing, as being an innocent, healthful exercise. "If it is not wrong to run and jump for sport, and for exercise, what harm," it is asked, "is there in stepping to music?" I answer, in itself there is none at all. To dancing, as a home amusement and exercise among children and youth, if it could be confined there, there would be no objection. If this amusement could be put under bonds to occupy its proper time and place, I would give it my hearty approval. But it is very impatient of restraint. Experience has proved — whether it can be accounted for or not — that dancing in promiscuous assemblies, where people meet together for this express purpose, is one of the most exciting, fascinating, absorbing pleasures ever invented; and that its influence upon those who engage in it is often decidedly injurious. There are some things which we must judge of by the effects they produce, rather than by a process of reasoning upon their nature; and dancing is one. As I said before, if dancing could be confined to the do-

mestic circle at home, under the parental eye, I should have nothing to say against it, but would class it with other innocent youthful sports. But, is it not almost invariably true, that when young people turn their attention to dancing, and learn the art, they are seldom content to practise it as a home exercise for an hour or two, but they must get up dancing parties and balls? These are as exciting as the intoxicating gas. The influence of the ball-room is exceedingly pernicious. It leads to extravagance in dress, and consequently to fostering the passions of envy, pride, and vanity. It leads to keeping late hours; and, by producing an unnatural exhilaration of spirits, the bodily powers are overtaxed, the health is much exposed, and not unfrequently the constitution is undermined, and many a lovely youth is hurried to a premature grave! When persons begin to indulge in the fascinating amusement of the dancing assembly, they enter a course which will probably end in a round of dissipation. The mind becomes almost entirely absorbed in the pleasure. It dwells upon it to the exclusion of almost everything else, both before and afterward. Every thought of God, and eternity, and the interests of the soul, is banished; and the mind is in as unsuitable a state to pray, and hold communion with God, as it can well be.

This is almost the invariable testimony of those

Christians who, in the days of their vanity, yielded themselves up to the influence of this intoxicating pleasure.

While, therefore, it is conceded that, in itself considered, there is nothing sinful in stepping to music, yet, when we consider the effect of dancing on the mind, its liability to abuse, and the evils to which it naturally and generally leads, must we not put it down on the list of objectionable, or at least *doubtful* amusements?

As for the *waltz*, or "round-dance" between the sexes, it is fit only for, and leads to, the house "of her whose feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell."

Card-playing is another species of objectionable amusement. To play any kind of game for a stake — in other words, to practise gambling — is obviously so inconsistent with Christian principle, that a word need not be said to convince you of the impropriety and sinfulness of it. But to play cards and other games for diversion merely, is thought by many to be unobjectionable. There are many games got up to interest and instruct children and young people which are innocent and proper; but among these "card-playing" is not to be classed; and the reason why cards are to be excepted is, their *evil tendency*. Card-playing is a stepping-stone to gambling; cards are the chief tools the gamester uses; and whoever gets in the

habit of using these tools in sport, will be very likely to use them, ere long, in earnest. There is, in the playing of cards, no mental discipline and no instruction, although there is a very dangerous fascination. It leads to a great waste of time, it produces an unhealthy mental excitement, leads to the keeping of unseasonable hours, and tends to dissipation generally. It is the *tendency* of this amusement, as learned by its history, which leads us to distinguish it from many innocent games — such as chess, draughts, dominos, etc., — and to discard it as improper for Christians to indulge in. It was once regarded a crime to have a pack of playing-cards in the house, and it was punished as such by the laws of the State of Connecticut. I might proceed and specify other amusements which might be placed in this category; but I would say, generally, that you should discard every amusement which you have reason to believe, from observation or experience, has an injurious effect upon the body, the intellect, or the heart. I shall close with a few practical considerations.

1. Amusements, if properly selected, although innocent and desirable, should ever hold a subordinate place. The great object and end of life is, not to be amused, but to be useful, glorify God, and prepare for eternity. Hence your worldly pleasures and recreations should occupy but a very small proportion of your precious time.

They will look very small when you come to lie down upon the bed of death, and smaller still when you look back upon them from the eternal world. You should, therefore, keep them within narrow limits, and give them no more of your time and attention than properly belongs to them. The heart should not be set upon them, and you should never for a moment permit them to come between you and the duties which you owe to God and your fellow-man.

2. You should lay it down as a safe practical rule, applicable at all times and in all circumstances, never to do anything which you cannot pray over and ask God's blessing upon. This may serve as a test to enable you to judge whether a proposed recreation is sinful or not: "Can I, without doing violence to my conscience, ask God's blessing upon this?" If not, then you may be pretty sure that it is wrong, and should be rejected.

3. You should often examine yourselves to see what effect your amusements produce upon your Christian character and feelings. Do they serve to increase your love to God, and excite a warmer love and gratitude to him for strewing so many flowers in your rugged pathway through this world to heaven, and do they quicken and enliven your devotions, and render your religious duties more pleasant? Or do they serve to withdraw

your hearts from God and heavenly things, hinder you in prayer, and give you a disrelish for the duties of the closet? If the former, then continue to enjoy them as the gifts of your Heavenly Father, and designed to do you good ; but if the latter, then beware of them, lest they prove snares laid by the devil to entrap your feet and keep you out of heaven. It is possible that some amusements, lawful in themselves, may be unlawful to you, on account of your peculiar temperament. If so, discard them at once and forever.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTELLECTUAL IMPROVEMENT.

Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.—PROV. 23: 12.

I ADDRESS you in this chapter, my young friends, on a most important subject, and one intimately connected with your happiness, respectability, and usefulness; and that is, *the cultivation and improvement of the mind*. It is a subject receiving more attention now in our country, and in the world, than in any previous time since the world was created. We live in an age of colleges, schools, books, periodicals, and newspapers; an age of discoveries in science, and of improvement in the arts. Formerly, knowledge was hidden from the masses; and if a man had ambition to know anything beyond what pertained to the most common affairs and necessities of life, it required a great deal of time, labor, and expense, to learn even a very little. But in our times, facilities for acquiring useful information are multiplied almost without measure. Knowledge, instead of being concealed, except from a favored

few, and acquired by them at very great disadvantage, is brought out from its seclusion, and courts attention. It now visits every man's door and asks admittance. Hence, in our times, there is no excuse for ignorance. Although some enjoy much greater facilities for acquiring knowledge and improving their minds than others, yet there is no person, however obscure his situation, and limited his pecuniary resources, who cannot obtain a respectable fund of useful information, and who cannot every day make some improvement. But it is nevertheless true, that multitudes of people, even now, do not realize nor appreciate as they ought, the privileges they enjoy ; or rather they do not appreciate the importance of *mental culture*. Their views of education, its end and object, are extremely limited. They think it important that persons should be able to read and write intelligibly enough at least to sign their names to notes and deeds, and to read the signatures of others ; to be sufficiently versed in geography to find their way to the nearest market-town and back again ; to understand enough of mathematics to compute the amount their produce comes to, and to count the dollars and cents they receive for it. So far as learning can be turned to any account in *making money*, they approve of it and acquire it, but no farther. This, in their view, is the sole value of education, and the only end

for which it should be obtained. With such views, no wonder they do not avail themselves of the abundant means which lie within their reach for mental improvement. Such persons take a very low, groveling view of their own nature and destiny. Just as if the great end of man's existence was to get and keep money ! or, as Bunyan illustrates it, "to spend the whole of life in gathering rubbish with a muck-rake !" My young friends, I hope you will remember that this was not the object for which God made you. He would not have created your minds, with all the capabilities for enlargement and refinement they possess, if he designed them to be forever employed about trifles. He designed that your minds should be improved, enlarged, and elevated by intelligence. The mind is like a precious gem, which in its natural state is rough, and sometimes gives no indication of the transcendent beauties that lie concealed within it. Give it to a person ignorant of its nature and its hidden virtues, and he would look upon it as nothing worth ; and he would cast it carelessly away, as he would a common pebble. But give it to a lapidary, and he will grind off its dull surface, and by long, faithful labor in rubbing, cutting, and polishing, will cause it to develop a sparkling brilliancy, astonishing to the beholder. Just so it is with the mind : if uncultivated and left in its natural state, as among the

Hottentots and the inhabitants of the South Seas, its powers and capabilities are unseen and not appreciated; and so far as appearances are concerned, it is not very much elevated above the most intelligent of the brute creation. But educate that mind, place it in favorable circumstances for development, rouse it up to action, stimulate it, give it suitable nourishment, bring it to think, reason, reflect, compare, read, and study, and its dormant powers and capabilities will be brought to light, so that a person will often be astonished at himself. To each one of you, my young friends, God has entrusted such a gem. He does not expect you to throw it away, or to let it remain as he gave it you, in its rough, unpolished state; but he designs to have you bestow a great deal of labor upon it,—polish it, and develop all its latent beauties. Your minds are talents which he has given you to improve; and he expects these talents to “gain other talents besides them,” and he bids you to “occupy till he comes.” Every day that passes over your heads should be a day of mental improvement. Your minds should be enlarged, and you should know more in the evening than you did in the morning. If you add only a *little* to your stock of knowledge every day, and retain it, at the end of the year you will be astonished at the amount you have acquired. Many persons, with small advan-



tages for attending school, by pursuing this course have acquired far more useful knowledge, and obtained a better education for all practical purposes, than multitudes who have been through college.

Feeling it to be far more important for you, my young friends, to improve your minds, than to learn how to make money, I propose to give some directions, attention to which cannot fail, I think, to result in your intellectual improvement.

1. In the *first* place, you must be *deeply impressed with a sense of its importance*. Persons will never make any great effort to obtain what they regard as of but little comparative consequence. Think of what you are; of the noble powers and faculties with which God has endowed you. Surely you were created for higher and nobler objects, than to enjoy the pleasures of sense, and grovel about here in the dirt, to see how much of it you can heap up and call it "wealth." The man who devotes his energies to the accumulation of this world, in any of its forms, rather than to the improvement of his mind, and to the acquisition of knowledge, is to be pitied. He acts unworthy of himself, and of the exalted nature God has given him. Solomon says a great deal on this subject. When comparing mental and worldly acquisitions, he says, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, with all thy gettings, get understanding." "Receive my in-

struction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold." "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction and understanding."

Job says, "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, 'it is not in me', and the sea saith, 'it is not with me.' It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold." You see by these passages, my young friends, how much greater value the sacred writers placed upon the attainments of the mind, than upon all the riches of this world. And yet, how many will sacrifice all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, to get money! Be yours a higher aim. Feel that the mind must have your first attention, and that earthly riches are purchased at too dear a rate if mental improvement is to be the price paid for them.

2. *Be determined that you will make something in the world worthy of intellectual beings.* Do not content yourselves with a reputation merely for skill, enterprise, and thrift in the industrial occupation you may have selected for life. There are multitudes of persons who have no greater ambition than to have it said of them, that they are good farmers, good mechanics, or good merchants, or good housekeepers. Let your aspirations be higher than this. It is very well to have a good reputation for business, but much better if you can add to it superior intelligence. I wish you to be known, in whatever circle you may move, as persons of information,—of reading, thought, and reflection. Determine that you will rise above the dead level with which so many are content. It is possible for you to rise much higher, in point of intelligence, than you ever thought of attaining. Perhaps you may reply, "If I had the advantages that some have of going to school or college, I then might hope to make something; but with my limited advantages it's of no use to try." Let me tell you, my friends, this is a very great mistake. It is not going to school, or to college, that makes a man; but a resolute, inflexible, persevering determination that he will become so, let his advantages be what they may. Colleges and schools are of inestimable value, and I would have you all, both

male and female, avail yourselves of their aid, if in your power, and circumstances will allow. Seminaries of learning are great auxiliaries in cultivating the mind; but a persistent, indomitable purpose to *rise in the world at any rate*, is worth more than they all. *Try* to make something, and you will. It has been very wisely said, "'I can't' never accomplished anything, but 'I will try' has wrought wonders." To nothing is this saying more applicable than to the cultivation of the mind. How many men have risen to eminence, even in the sciences and the professions, with scarcely any external advantages at all, simply because they determined they would do so. Such are called "self-made men." Benjamin Franklin was one of them, and so was Roger Sherman, and so was Abraham Lincoln. They had very few advantages for going to school. One was a printer, another a shoemaker, and the other an uncultivated backwoodsman. And yet, by their own efforts, they rose to great eminence, and left their names inscribed upon the scroll of their nation's history; and there they will remain, in characters of light, till time shall be no more.

What should hinder some of you from becoming like one of them, unless it be indolence or irresolution? There have been thousands of men, whose native talents were as good as theirs, who have lived and died in ignorance and obscurity,

only for the want of their resolution and self-application. Remember the adage, "What has been done, may be done again." If Franklin became a great, wise, and learned man, with but few school advantages,—if Roger Sherman rose from the shoemaker's bench to the bench of the Supreme Court, and then to a seat in Congress,—if Abraham Lincoln rose from the position of a boatman on the Western rivers, or a "splitter of rails" in an Illinois forest, to the Presidential chair, why may not you rise to eminence in some sphere, provided you will adopt their resolution, diligence, and patient perseverance?

3. *Appropriate some portion of every day to mental improvement.* Perhaps some of you may say that "you are so circumstanced, and your time so much taken up, that it cannot be done." Yes, it *can*. I do not believe there is one person in ten thousand who cannot, by extra care and diligence, redeem a few moments each day both for devotion, and the cultivation of the mind. If it be only five or ten minutes, those, if faithfully improved, will enable you, in a course of years, to add a vast amount to your stock of knowledge. Always have on hand some useful book for reading or study. Some of you, probably most of you, have completed your education at school; but that is no reason why you should throw aside your school-books. A few moments devoted to

looking over, and reviewing your former studies, will be of incalculable value to you. You will be much better able to understand and apply your studies now, than when you attended to them as tasks. By looking over a page or half a page, in the morning, of your geography, or natural philosophy, or astronomy, or rhetoric, or mental philosophy, or even a rule or two of grammar or arithmetic, you will have material for thought while your hands are busily employed at work. Our minds are always busy, and it is not necessary that they should be wholly engrossed by our manual employment, unless our work should happen to be very intricate and difficult. The farmer, when wielding his hoe or axe, or holding his plough; the mechanic and artisan when using their tools; the lady when plying her needle, may often, without detriment to their work, employ their thoughts on other subjects. And I believe they generally do. Now, instead of letting the mind wander at random to this thing or that, or upon frivolous or unprofitable themes, let it dwell upon something that you read in the morning,—some principle in natural philosophy or mathematics, some fact in natural science, geography, or history, and it will soon become interested; and sometimes a new train of thought will be struck out, which, if prosecuted, may result in the discovery

of new truths or some new invention to bless the world. Most of the improvements in the arts, and the most valuable inventions, have been thought out by practical men when engaged in their work. But they would never have had these trains of thought, and would never have made these improvements had they not laid the foundation for them in their habits of daily reading and study. In addition to an occasional review of the books you studied in school, you may enlarge your ideas and expand the mind by a course of general reading. Instead of spending your leisure time, as too many young people do, in reading novels and newspaper tales, many of which tend to enervate and often to poison the mind, read something that will add to the treasures of your store-house of knowledge, and strengthen the powers of the intellect. To this end I would advise you to a *course* of reading. I spoke of reading in the preceding chapter as an amusement. I now speak of it as a *duty* — a means of mental improvement as well. History especially should claim your attention. You should of course be familiar with the historical events of our own State and country. Ignorance here is inexcusable in anybody.

Reading the history of England should follow that of our own country, for that is the land of our ancestors; and then the history of the other

nations of Europe. It is not to be expected that you will read all the larger works of modern history; but there are excellent compendiums which will give you a general knowledge of the rise and progress of all the civilized nations of the earth.

Ancient history should be perused, particularly the compendium of Rollin, where you will find much in a little space. I would also advise you to make yourselves familiar with ecclesiastical history, and by all means read D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation.

It would be useful to you to read the biographies of Washington, Franklin, Brainerd, Henry Martyn, Legh Richmond, Henry Kirke White, William Wirt, James B. Taylor, and a host of others that might be mentioned. It is extremely improving to the mind as well as the heart to peruse the lives of great and good men, for we can hardly help being inspired with a desire to imitate their example, and to emulate their virtues.

But I will not detain you longer on the subject of reading. I would say, generally, if you would improve, always have on hand a useful book, and read at least a page or two in it every day. You can do it if you only think so.

4. In the *fourth* place, I would advise all my young friends to be in the habit invariably of putting the inquiry to themselves every even-

ing, "*What have I learned that is new or useful to-day?*" "What do I know this evening that I did not know in the morning?" There need not be, and there ought not to be, a day allowed to pass over your heads without your obtaining at least *one* new, useful idea. Some days you may obtain a number. Now it would be well for you to bring yourselves to the test every evening by putting the inquiry, "What new fact, new truth, new principle have I learned to-day?" This practice will give definiteness and shape to what you may have learned, and will be a monitor to reprove you if you have learned nothing. I was once acquainted with an excellent boarding-school where, at the supper-table, each young lady was required to state at least *one useful thing she knew* which she did not know in the morning.

I would advise you still further, to keep a blank book, and write down that new idea, or new fact which you acquired during the day, and then you will make sure of it. If you are faithful in carrying out this plan, you will find your book rapidly growing in your hands, and in a little time you will find it a most valuable repository of useful knowledge, and that knowledge will be all your own. It will be incorporated into your very being, and become as it were a part of yourself, and it will, during your lifetime, and when you are dead and gone, be a perpetual memento of your good judgment and industry.

5. In the *fifth* place I would say, if you would improve your minds, *always have your eyes and ears open to notice whatever is useful or interesting in the world around you*, and then think about it, and reason about it, and get all the information you can pertaining to it.

Take every proper opportunity to converse on subjects of interest and importance, and especially to ask questions of those whose knowledge is superior to your own. By conversation and comparing views, you will be able often to mutually edify and instruct each other.

6. *Lastly*, there is nothing so well calculated to improve and enlarge the mind *as the study of God and his works*. Here is a field of thought vast as immensity. The powers of an angel can never fully explore it. We can never comprehend the Divine Being; yet by diligent study and prayer, we may learn much that pertains to his being and his character, and every new discovery we make of him, tends to improve both the heart and the intellect. How great is God! and how great are his works! Everything about him is infinite, and although infinity is entirely past our comprehension, yet a contemplation of it cannot fail to raise the mind from trifles, and to make an effort to reach forward and try to grasp at something beyond itself, great and elevated. Every attempt of the kind serves to quicken the mind

to activity, and to strengthen and enlarge its powers.

I have given you a brief outline, my young friends, of a method by which you may make daily improvement as intellectual beings. Much more might be said on this subject; but if you will only put faithfully in practice the few hints I have given, you will soon find yourselves rising in the scale of intelligence; you will be able to investigate and comprehend subjects which now appear to you dark and inexplicable; you will find an enjoyment in intellectual pursuits far superior to *making money*; you will be respected in society; you will enjoy far greater facilities for doing good, and you will prepare for a tranquil and happy old age.

CHAPTER IX.

STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.—Ps. 119 : 9.

THESE words imply that it is not an easy matter for the young to get through the world without being corrupted and led astray. The Psalmist undoubtedly spoke from experience. David was pious when very young. He was but a stripling when he fought and slew Goliath; but he seems *then* to have made great attainments in piety, for he talks like an old hero who had long held familiar intercourse with God. He also refers back to his more youthful experience, when he had placed his confidence in God, and God had delivered him from the paw of the lion and the bear. But still, David had a depraved heart, like all other young men, and was no doubt often betrayed into sin. In another place he prays God "not to remember against him the sins of his youth." He found it no easy matter to resist all the temptations by which he was assailed, and to make his way through them unscathed. Hence

he inquires, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" How shall he make his way through this sinful, corrupt world without being polluted? He himself answers the question in the second clause of the verse. He is to cleanse his way "*by taking heed thereto according to God's word.*" God's truth is to be his guide. If the young man will be careful to consult that, and square his life according to its heavenly teachings, then he may go on securely and not fear contamination.

David expressed an important truth, applicable to youth of both sexes; they can cleanse their way, and walk securely the slippery paths they are called to tread, only by *consulting the Bible*, and taking it as a "lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path."

The subject which I propose for your consideration in this chapter, my young friends, is *the importance to you of an intimate acquaintance with the sacred scriptures, and of taking the Bible as your guide through life*. From your infancy you have been taught to read the Bible, and to revere it as the word of God. You have in this volume a treasure above all price. It is worth more to you, ten thousand times, than all the treasures of earth put together; and yet I apprehend you do not fully appreciate it, for there are few persons who do; and there is danger, *not* that you will

totally neglect it,—for I can hardly conceive that possible if you are real Christians,—but that you will undervalue it, and will read and study it much less than you ought. Suffer me, then, to present unto you some of the claims of the Bible upon your attention.

The Bible is a most remarkable book. To the mere scholar it is the most interesting and instructive book ever written. Its antiquity far exceeds that of any other composition whatever. It contains the only authentic account of the history of our race. As a mere book of *history* it infinitely surpasses in interest any other; it is, in fact, a clew to all other history, and the only ancient history that can be implicitly relied on. As a *literary* work it is unrivaled by the most learned and elaborate productions, either of ancient or modern times. There was no poetry ever written that will compare in beauty and sublimity with the hallowed inspirations of David, Isaiah, Job, and others. It is necessary only for the man of letters and of taste, whether he be a Christian or an infidel, to compare, with candor and impartiality, the Bible with the most celebrated of all other writings, in respect to purity of style, simplicity, elevation of sentiment, poetic imagery, grandeur and sublimity of conception, disinterestedness and benevolent tendency, and moral excellence, and he cannot fail to

give the scriptures the decided preference, and every man of candor will acknowledge it. The above is the testimony of Sir William Jones, one of England's most distinguished Christian scholars of the eighteenth century. But it is on account of its *divine authority* that the Bible presents the strongest claim to your attention. The Bible is no human composition ; it had its origin in heaven and was dictated by God. It was written by men under the special, immediate inspection, guidance, and control of the Holy Spirit, so that it comes to us with all the authority with which a message would be clothed written by the finger of God himself ; and when we read the sacred scriptures, we should ever feel and realize that God is speaking to us, as truly, as emphatically, and as authoritatively, as if he were to meet us face to face, and address us by an audible voice.

This book has a claim upon your attention on account of the *important and interesting revelations it makes of a future state, and the spirit world*. Without the Bible, all our knowledge of the immortality of the soul, and of another world, to which the spirit goes at death, would be vague and indefinite. The most that the light of nature teaches on this subject is at best only a probable conjecture. There is implanted in the breasts of all men a desire for immortality ; but this desire cannot be regarded as very decisive or

satisfactory proof of the doctrine. There has also been a very general belief among all nations, that there is to be another life; but this does not constitute reliable evidence. Analogies are drawn from the natural world to prove the resurrection and a future state; but these analogies teach us nothing positive,—they only serve to inspire a pleasing hope, by showing that such a belief is not irrational. The Bible alone draws aside the curtain, and permits us to see what there is beyond it. It solves the great question, "If a man die shall he live again?" It brings "life and immortality to light" in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It contains the history of him who is himself "the resurrection and the life," and has become "the first fruits of them that slept"; so that now all doubt is dissipated. Man is no longer left to conjecture as to the fact of a spiritual state. It has been demonstrated by the resurrection of Christ. This is the important hinge on which the whole of this doctrine turns. If Christ had not risen, the world would have gone on in darkness, doubt, and ignorance as before; but that Christ rose, we have the most full, satisfactory, and convincing and well-substantiated account in the New Testament, and in his resurrection we have a sure pledge of our own.

The Bible has a claim upon your attention from the circumstance that *it contains God's law to man,*

—the rule by which our conduct is to be governed in all the relations and circumstances of life. God has written his law upon the works of nature, but not with great minuteness, and not always with sufficient distinctness to enable us fully to understand and apply it. In the Bible, he has republished that law with great perspicuity and precision, so that "he who runs may read it, and a wayfaring man though a fool, need not err therein." He has here carefully delineated our duties to him, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves, so that now none need be in serious doubt in regard to any important duty. It was this law which so much delighted the pious David, the excellency of which he sung in such varied and beautiful strains in the 119th Psalm. "I will speak of thy testimonies," says he, "before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments which I have loved, and I will meditate in thy statutes. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." To this law God will hold us to a strict account, and by it are we to be judged in the day of final reckoning. This is that by which "a young man" is to "cleanse his way." It is our sure guide, and our only sure guide through all the dangerous, deceitful paths of human life.

The Bible has a claim upon your attention *because of the light it sheds upon the destiny of man.* I have already said that the Bible teaches man's immortality,—that there is a life beyond the grave. It goes further, and instructs us what that life is to be. It lays open to our view the future world, and discloses to us infinite eternal joys, which will be the blessed inheritance of those who keep the commandments of God; and also the darkness, despair, and woes unutterable which will be the dreadful portion of those who know not God, and obey not his laws. It paints for our inspection, in the most glowing colors, the beauties of the New Jerusalem, the city of our God, filled with delights, and adorned as a bride is adorned for her husband. This city is the dwelling-place of God, and is to be the eternal dwelling-place of all his children. It is where the Godhead unveils himself, and reveals his glories to the admiring view of all his delighted worshipers. We should know but little, indeed we should know nothing about heaven, were it not for the revelations made of it by the sacred scriptures. This book uncovers also the bottomless pit, and permits us to hear the weeping and wailing which come up from thence, and discloses to our view the fire, and the worm, and the blackness of darkness, and the "smoke of torment which ascendeth up forever and ever!" One or the other of these

worlds, the Bible teaches us, is to be the final destiny of us all. The soul, the immortality of which it brings to view, is to be rendered happy in the unspeakable joys of heaven, or it is to be rendered infinitely and eternally miserable in the world of woe ! Surely a book must be deserving of our attention which treats of such themes, and opens to us such scenes in the future.

The Bible has a claim upon your attention *because it points the way that leads to heaven*. It reveals the natural character of man as a sinner, and the relations he sustains to God, whom he has offended, and whose laws he has broken. We are all "by nature children of wrath," and are justly exposed to that doom which is so vividly described in the scriptures, as the portion of the wicked. A way has been provided for our forgiveness. Christ has interposed in our behalf. He has become our Mediator. He has shed his blood to wash away our sins and reconcile us to God ; and he is now our Advocate on high. He invites us to come to him, with assurances of our receiving pardon and eternal life. God can be just, and yet merciful through Christ ; and in this way alone. For Jesus' sake he will remember our iniquities no more, and blot them out of his book. He will remit to us the penalty of his law which we had incurred, transfer our names to the book of life, and grant us a title to the heavenly inher-

itance. Here is a glorious plan of salvation, devised by infinite wisdom, and executed by infinite love, and absolutely essential to our happiness. But how are we made acquainted with this plan? How are we to understand its provisions, and the way in which we may avail ourselves of the benefits of this great, this wonderful salvation? It is only by studying the Bible. This book alone contains the history of redemption. It is here only that we learn the way to be saved. It is in this blessed book that we are made acquainted with the nature, character, and work of Christ, and read the history of his cross, and the place it occupies in God's economy of grace. Not only do the scriptures teach us in regard to the way in which justice and mercy are reconciled in Christ, so that God can forgive sin without in the least compromising the honor of his law and his truth; but they teach us what *we must do*, as the condition of our personal interest in the atonement. We are taught how our hearts may be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and how that, by repentance and faith, we may be made partakers of the grace of God, and be washed in the blood of his Son.

The Bible has a claim upon your attention on *account of the sources of comfort, support, and consolation* it opens to us amid all the troublous scenes of life. There are no trials or afflictions so great, or so peculiar, but we may find consola-

tion in this blessed book. Here are words of kind and affectionate sympathy for every heart-broken and stricken soul,— they are the words of a tender parent, who is never unmindful of the wants of his children, or unaffected by their woes. What a comfort was the word of God to David in his trials: "Unless thy law had been my delight," says he, "I should then have perished in mine affliction." "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet thy commandments are my delight." And similar to his is the experience of every saint. The Bible is a well-spring of consolation to the child of sorrow, whence he can draw living water.

Such being the claims of the Bible upon your attention, my young friends, let me earnestly exhort you to read and study it with a great deal of care. It is the very last book that you should permit to remain on your shelf till the dust accumulates upon its covers. We should naturally suppose that the Bible, from the very nature of the subjects of which it treats, and the source from which it comes, would be the first book sought after by every rational being, and the very last book that would be laid aside and forgotten. But exactly the reverse of this is true. The Bible is the most shamefully neglected book that was ever published. There are many persons who do not open it as often as once a week, and some who do not read a chapter

in it once a month, and some even who do not look into it once a year ! Strange, that persons making a journey through a dark, blind, dangerous wilderness, where there are so many gins to entrap their feet, and so many by-paths looking fair and promising, to lure them out of the way and land them in destruction, where there are so many perilous and difficult passes, where there are so many enemies and false guides,—strange, I say, that any persons making this important and hazardous journey, should be so negligent in consulting their guide-book ! Even Christians, those who have tasted the sweets of the waters which flow from this well-spring of life, too often neglect this fountain, and seek to slake their thirst at broken cisterns and turbid streams. Let me persuade you, my young friends, to make yourselves very familiar with the Bible. Never, on any account, let a day pass over you without your consulting its pages. Make it your constant companion and counsellor. It will befriend you in every emergency. It will shed light upon your path, and make it look plain and cheerful, however dark and dreary may be your way. Although you may not always find specific instructions and directions to apply to all possible circumstances, yet you will find principles laid down there, which, if carried out, will embrace every contingency. Whenever, therefore, you are in doubt respecting the way you ought

to go, betake yourselves to the word of God. It will be to you, as it was to David, "a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path."

I shall conclude this chapter by suggesting a few hints in regard to the manner in which you should study the Bible.

1. Read it *habitually*. I have already said that reading the Bible should be with you a daily exercise. Let it be a companion of your closet. When you retire to speak to God, take your Bible in your hand, and first let him speak to you. It will serve to compose your mind, arrest the current of worldly thoughts, and prepare the heart for holding intercourse with its Maker. It may not be most profitable for you to read a very *large* portion of Scripture when you retire for devotion. A single chapter, and sometimes a part of a chapter in the New Testament, or in the devotional parts of the Old Testament, will afford you ample materials for meditation and thought, before you bend the knee in prayer. But I would by all means have you in the habit of reading some portion of the Holy Scriptures daily in your closets. I do not believe that you will long maintain the spirit of prayer without doing so.

2. Read your Bibles *systematically*. You should take other occasions to read your Bibles besides when you retire for devotion. You should study your Bibles as well as read them; *i. e.*, you should

read with a great deal of care ; try to get at the exact meaning by comparing scripture with scripture, and by consulting judicious commentaries. It would be well to take up some particular book, for instance the book of Genesis, and give it your special attention. And then the book of Exodus, and so on in course. By carefully examining a portion of scripture every day, you will, at the end of a year, have accomplished a great deal.

3. Read your Bibles with a *teachable disposition*. Come to this sacred volume with a sense of your ignorance, and need of divine illumination. Come with a determination to "hear what God the Lord will speak ;" "as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Let not the natural pride of the heart rise up and sit in judgment upon God's truth, approving this portion of it, but condemning that, because it does not square with your preconceived opinions ; but as Mary came and sat at the feet of Jesus, to drink in his words, and to be taught of him, so do you come in the same spirit to the same Saviour, and receive his words as recorded in the Bible by the pen of inspiration.

4. Read your Bible *seriously*. Do not trifle with the sacred oracles, or read them carelessly as you would read an almanac or a newspaper. Remember that this is God's truth, and that he is speaking to you ; and to treat his word with levity,

or to read it in a careless, indifferent manner, is a species of profanity the sinfulness of which is little, if any, less than the taking of his name in vain.

5. Read your Bibles *prayerfully*. Ask the assistance of the Holy Spirit that you may be guided into all truth, for he it is that taketh of the things of God, and showeth them unto man. It was David's constant prayer, "teach me thy statutes." Ever let it be yours. Your *minds are dark*, and they of themselves cannot see or comprehend the things of God. Ask God to enlighten them. Your hearts are hard, and cannot or will not receive God's truth, even if you understand it. Ask God to soften them, that you may be enabled to receive the engrafted word. A little child in a prayerful frame of mind, and under the teachings of God's Spirit, will understand more of the Bible, in its practical sense, than the greatest philosopher can do, left to his own unaided reason. Therefore, when you take your Bible in your hands to read or study it, let your heart first ascend up to God in the petition, "Lord, guide me into all truth."

Lastly. Read the Bible *practically*. The Bible was given to mankind as a practical book, not as a book of theories for speculation. It is full of plain, practical instructions, addressed to the common-sense of plain, unlettered men, as well

as to the profound scholar, to influence them in their conduct, to make them virtuous and holy. You should therefore determine that you will do as well as learn the will of God. David was a practical student of God's truth, and he left an example for your imitation. It will be of little use for you to study your Bibles, or to learn your duty, if you do not reduce to practice what you learn. You are now, my young friends, just entering upon the stage of life. Important duties, and weighty responsibilities will soon devolve upon you. Many dangers lie in your way; they even now surround your path. You will often be in doubt what course to pursue, and you will want a friend as a counsellor and guide. Such a friend you have *in God*, and he speaks to you through the Bible. Bind this volume then to your heart. Make it your daily counsellor, and consistently follow its teachings, and you cannot go astray. It will conduct you safely through all life's mazes, and devious and difficult windings, to heaven, your rest and eternal home.

CHAPTER X.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

Prove your own selves.—2 COR. 13: 5.

A FAVORITE maxim of Solon was, "KNOW THYSELF." Next to a knowledge of God, there is no knowledge more important than a knowledge of ourselves. Indeed, a certain degree of self-knowledge is essential to our saving knowledge of God. To know ourselves should constitute a part of our education. Still, there are few things persons are more profoundly ignorant of than their own characters. But this ignorance is not in general suspected by them, even when to others it is most palpable. Mankind generally think they know all about themselves. Indeed, we all do. We never think of going to any neighbor to ask about our traits of character, intellectual or moral; for we think we know better than he. And "why should we not?" we say; "we have a much better opportunity to examine ourselves than he has to examine us; we can look into our own hearts, and he cannot; we have constant opportunity to be looking at ourselves,

but our neighbor sees us only occasionally; and his observation of us, from the very nature of the case, must be superficial."

Now all this sounds plausibly enough, but nevertheless, it is very often true, that our neighbors, or the community, form a more accurate judgment of some of our mental or moral characteristics than we do ourselves. This remark, however, will not apply to the man who is secretly a knave or a hypocrite. Such a man is conscious that he is playing a double part, and is a villain, and his very success in his schemes depends upon his putting himself off upon the public for being a better man than he is. But in regard to men who are not two-sided, and who do not consciously and designedly sail under false colors, they do not understand themselves, in respect to some of their peculiar traits of character, as well as the public do.

Take a few examples. Here is a man whom the community have long since voted as *close, parsimonious, niggardly*; but he has no suspicion of it himself, and you could not offend him more readily than to intimate such a thing to him. He thinks himself a liberal, noble, public-spirited man. Now the public have no such idea at all. They notice how many ways he will shift, and turn, and prevaricate sometimes, to save a few pennies of a tax or assessment, which in honor he ought to

pay. They notice how he always opposes any public improvement, if a small proportion of the expense is likely to fall on him ; while his hand is always up to vote for anything which he sees will be to his benefit, provided others will have to foot the bills. They notice how he never gives away a cent if he can possibly help it ; and when he gives away anything, he makes his contribution as small as he thinks will answer. They observe how he always contrives to get half a cent more than the market price for what he has to sell, and how he manages to pay half a cent less than the market price for what he buys, and he gets the half-cent when he makes change, and the public write him down a "half-cent man." And the public are right in their judgment ; but he has no suspicion that such is his real character ; and if sometimes it gets to his ears that he is regarded as mean and niggardly, he resents it, and considers himself a slandered and injured man. It is because he does not know himself. Here is another man, whom the public have written down as *worldly-minded*. He is not mean and niggardly, like the other. He does not descend so low ; but it is perfectly obvious to every one, that his whole soul is engrossed in making money, and that money is his idol — the god, and only god, he worships,— and yet he does not know it. Everybody else sees it but himself.

You may take persons generally, who have an unenviable reputation in the community, — the proud, the conceited, the unreasonable, the impolite, the misanthropic, the lazy, those who are busy-bodies and forever meddling with other people's matters, telling tales and stirring up strife, and making difficulties among friends and neighbors,— you take, I say, any of these classes of persons, and you will find that, in most cases, they are profoundly ignorant of their own peculiar traits of character, while everybody else can read them as they read a book. Society understands these persons. Nobody is blinded but themselves.

In addressing you, my young friends, on the subject of "Self-knowledge," I shall consider, in the *first* place, some of the prominent particulars respecting yourselves, in regard to which it is important that you should obtain knowledge.

These particulars embrace your *natural*, and your *moral* characteristics.

Your *natural* characteristics include your talents or mental abilities, your dispositions, your temperaments, your tastes, and your passions.

These are something born with you ; they are a part of your being, and for the existence of which you are not responsible. You are responsible only for the use or improvement you make of them. Still it is of great importance that you know with what God has endowed you. When

a person is set up in business by a friend, he considers it indispensable, in the first place, that he know how much capital he has got to trade with ; and what kind of capital it is ; and in what shape.

God has, so to speak, set each one of you up in business in this world ; he has given you a *capital* in your mental endowments, and it is of great importance that you know what sort of a mind you have got. Persons are very much mistaken often in respect to their mental abilities ; some get the idea that they are remarkably talented, great geniuses, when in fact they are not one whit above the ordinary level of mankind, and perhaps not up to it. Others have such an excess of modesty, they very much undervalue themselves, and feel that their talents are inadequate to their accomplishing much, if they undertake to ; consequently they always stand in the background, and leave others to assume responsibilities which of right belong to them, and which they are equally capable of sustaining. It is of importance that you think neither too highly, nor too lowly of yourselves in this particular, but that you estimate yourselves as you really are. Your natural *dispositions and temperaments*, also, it is important that you understand. Are you easily excited ? Is your mind sensitive, — easily raised and easily depressed, — or are you cold and phlegmatic ? Are you naturally hopeful, or

desponding? Are your passions and appetites naturally headstrong, so that they need to be held in, as with bit and bridle, or are they tame and easily controlled?

It is of equal and even of greater importance, that you ascertain your *moral characteristics*, or those conditions and habits of mind which you have had an influence in forming, and for which you are responsible.

You have before you one great end and aim in life; you are under the influence of one supreme governing purpose, to which all others are subservient. What is it? It is of the greatest importance to know what you are living for. What is the secret spring which propels all the moral machinery of your being? Do you live to do good, or to get good? Are your motives benevolent or selfish? Is it your main purpose to serve and glorify God, or to promote your private ends?

There are a great many distinct topics which come under this head, which are proper subjects of inquiry, if you would know yourselves. What habits have you formed? Are they good or bad, and what is the influence they are exerting upon you and others? What prejudices do you entertain against this individual or that one, and what is the cause of those prejudices? Have they any good foundation? What thoughts do you cherish, and in what channel do they run from hour to

hour, and from day to day? The mind is very liable to indulge in vain, foolish, and sinful imaginings, and needs to be watched.

It is important that you ascertain the *strength* of your moral principles. Are they uniformly and consistently carried out in your daily intercourse with mankind? You often see a sad deficiency in others in this respect; you sometimes see a want of strict integrity, truthfulness, honor, and fairness, even in some who profess to be governed by Christian principle; and you are both pained and disgusted by it. Are you certain that others do not see the same in you, at least in some degree? Are you certain that you know and see yourselves as others see you? Your disinterestedness, your liberality, your public spirit, your kindness, your patience and forbearance under injuries, the spirit you manifest under the painful dispensations of Providence, are all proper topics to come under review when you are seeking to know yourselves.

But there is one point to which I wish to direct your particular attention;—it is this. You all have your *easily besetting sins*. Everybody has them. There are certain sins which you can be much more easily betrayed to the commission of than others. These are your weak points. The devil knows what they are, and it is here he will be most likely to attack you, and where he

will be most likely to succeed. It is of the greatest importance that you should be sufficiently acquainted with yourselves to know what these weak points in your character are. Your neighbors and companions, doubtless, have discovered them long before this.

Let us consider, in the *second* general division of our subject, some of the *reasons* why it is important that you should acquire a knowledge of yourselves.

1. The *first* I shall mention is, that *you may be the better able to choose your path in life*, and adopt that profession or employment for which your talents, tastes, and dispositions qualify you. A great many sad and fatal mistakes have been committed here for the want of self-knowledge. We often hear it said that such a man has "mistaken his calling." The reason was, he did not understand enough about himself to know for *what* calling he was fitted. It is not every man that is calculated for a minister, or a doctor, or a lawyer. There is many a man in each of these professions who never ought to have been there, while there are many laboring on the farm, or in the shop, with whom it would have been well, both for them and the community, had they changed places. A just appreciation of your own talents, tastes, and dispositions, will enable you to decide upon that course of life for which you are best fitted, and which promises the greatest success.

2. Self-knowledge will save you much *mortification*. You would not then expose yourselves to the jeers, laughter, and contempt of the world, as persons often do, who, from a conceited notion that they have qualifications which they never had, have put themselves into a position which made them ridiculous.

3. Self-knowledge will *give you self-possession* when you are in your proper sphere. Knowing that you have not undertaken that which is above your knowledge or your capacity, there is no reason why you should anticipate a failure, and you will go forward with a degree of confidence, based on a sure foundation, to which the self-ignorant man is a stranger.

4. Self-knowledge will *enable you to correct your faults*. It will *discover* to you a great many which you did not suppose you possessed, and discovery is the first step to correction.

5. Self-knowledge will be likely to *promote your humility*. It certainly will, unless you have formed too low an estimate of yourselves, which is not likely to be the case. By examining yourselves, you will find that you are sadly deficient in many things, the fancied possession of which had engendered in your bosom no small degree of pride. You will find, also, in your characters, many positive blemishes, and these discoveries will furnish abundant ground for humility and self-abasement.

6. Self-knowledge will, if you are Christians, *give you facilities for growing in grace*. You will thus be enabled to see wherein you come short of your duty, in what respects your conduct is inconsistent with your profession, what parts of your Christian character are wanting and need culture, what sinful habits you have which need to be broken off. This knowledge will enable you to correct your errors, improve your deficiencies, place a double guard on all your weak points, and to see how much you need Divine grace to help your infirmities. If you are faithful to yourselves, you will turn all this knowledge which you gain of yourselves, to your spiritual improvement.

7. Once more, it is only by a knowledge of yourselves that you will be able to have any comfortable *assurance of your eternal salvation*.

If you are ignorant of the state of your own hearts, ignorant of the fact whether you love and serve the god of this world better than you do Jehovah, how can there be anything but uncertainty hanging over your future prospects? As you value, therefore, a good and comforting hope of heaven, my young friends, know your own selves.

I shall conclude by mentioning, in the *third* place, *how this self-knowledge is to be obtained*.

And here I would say, it is *not* to be obtained, as some suppose it is, by going to a phrenologist and getting him to examine your head, and then write down your traits of character, as he finds this or that bump on your cranium developed. Whatever may be the uses of phrenology, this is not one of them. But self-knowledge is to be obtained

1. First, by a laborious, careful, persevering scrutiny of yourselves. You are to study yourselves as you would study a book, only with a great deal more industry and particularity. Look at your conduct with an impartial eye, as others look at it. Carefully scan your motives for what you do. It is the *motive* from which you perform your actions, much more than the actions themselves, that determines your character. Examine the bent of your inclinations, the prevailing current of your thoughts, the drift of your conversation, the main object of your pursuit. Often test the moral virtues which you think you possess by the unerring standard of God's word. Inquire into your integrity in your dealings with your fellow-men, your honor, and your truthfulness in your intercourse with them. Inquire, also, as in the presence of God, and with eternity in view, into the sincerity of your faith and repentance, and whether all the Christian graces are in you and abound. Your examination must be deep, persevering, and thorough.

2. Secondly, you should pay a degree of deference to the opinions which others may have formed respecting you. I would by no means advise you to be running about town to ascertain what this or that man or woman thinks of you ; but if it should come to your ears that you have a reputation in the community for littleness, for parsimony, for worldly-mindedness, for want of integrity or veracity, or for gossiping and going about as busy-bodies, intermeddling with other men's matters which do not concern you, or should the community pronounce an unfavorable verdict upon you in regard to any of the moral virtues,—instead of being angry about it and resenting it, as you will be strongly tempted to do, it would be far better for you to suspect there must be some truth in that verdict. The public don't pass judgment on a person for nothing. There is almost always some foundation for the opinion they form of a man, whether that opinion be good or bad. At any rate, you should make public sentiment an occasion for obtaining a more accurate knowledge of yourselves ; and in forming your own judgment, the judgment of the public must be taken into the account.

3. Thirdly, look to God for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit. It is so difficult for us to get a perfect knowledge of ourselves, we shall never do it without God's help. David

says, "Who can understand his errors?" And then feeling the need of Divine guidance and aid in this matter, he offers the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." It is in the same way, my young friends, that you will, if ever, obtain a perfect, or even a satisfactory self-knowledge. You must have God to help you by his Spirit, and his aid must be sought after by humble, fervent prayer. He alone can light up the dark recesses of your hearts, so that you can look within, and see what has hitherto lain there concealed from your view. God knows all about you, and if you will go to him in earnest prayer, desiring him to *search* you, and try you, and reveal you to your own selves, he will do it, and you may rely with implicit confidence on his heavenly teachings.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

I press toward the mark.—PHIL. 3: 14.

MANY persons seem to mistake the object of conversion. We should suppose from the course they pursue, and the interest, or rather the want of interest they manifest in a religious, godly life, that religion was with them nothing but a prudential matter, and designed merely to save the soul from future misery. Hence, if they have a comforting hope that they shall be saved, the great end of becoming religious is answered, and they give themselves but little concern farther on the subject. Sometimes, indeed, they will wake up from the state of entire apathy and worldliness into which they had fallen, and for awhile manifest a considerable degree of solicitude and interest in regard to serious things. But it is obvious that their solicitude and interest arise from an apprehension that they themselves may not be safe: they fear that their conversion may prove not to have been genuine, and they may lose their souls after all; and their great

solicitude is to make their salvation sure. If they can be fully satisfied of this, it is the most they want. Such persons have a very low and inadequate idea of the nature of true piety and its object. The religion of the gospel (and that is the only religion which is of the least value) is not thus selfish. To be sure, it has reference to the salvation of the soul from hell; and no doubt but a desire to be saved, is generally the first motive that prompts the sinner to give his attention to the subject. But when his eyes are fully opened, and his heart is changed, he has more enlarged views; he in a great measure loses sight of himself, in his love to God and desire for the promotion of his glory.

The real object of the sinner's conversion in the mind of God is twofold: first, God's own glory; secondly, the sinner's personal good in being rescued from eternal death, and made an heir to immortal blessedness in heaven. Those who look no farther than the last, who have reference to nothing but to getting to heaven, will probably fail of their object. The sum and substance of all goodness, either in God or man, is *benevolence*; and where this is wanting, there can be no piety. True benevolence in man has for its first and great object *the glory of God*; and the consideration of reward and personal good, comes in afterward, and is altogether subordinate. Hence

the Christian's work is only *begun* when he espouses the cause of Christ, and connects himself with his Church. He merely enters upon the great business of life,—the great end for which he was created, and for which Divine grace has converted him; and that business is to glorify God. An honest, conscientious, diligent youth, who apprentices himself to a master to learn a trade, does not feel that he has accomplished his object when he signs his indentures, and enters upon service. He begins as a novice; he has a great deal to learn, and a great deal to do; and were he to make no attempt to learn or do anything, he had better by far have remained at home, for he would be of no service to his master, nor secure any good to himself. The young Christian, when he espouses the cause of Christ and enters his service is, as it were, only a novice; he has as yet done nothing for his Master. He has only entered into a solemn engagement to serve him faithfully until death. At the commencement of this service he has had no experience, and has but little knowledge. He enters as a learner, and it is expected of him that he will make great improvement, and it is indispensable that he should, if he would be of any essential benefit to the Master to whom he has consecrated himself. The professed Christian who makes no progress, and does not expect to make any, had better never have entered the Church, or entertained any hope.

I would, therefore, in this chapter, urge upon the consideration of my young friends who indulge the hope that they are the disciples of Christ, the subject of CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

I shall *first* explain what is to be understood by Christian progress.

Secondly, give some directions how it is to be made ; and conclude

By urging some motives for making it.

1. I am in the *first* place, to explain what we are to understand by Christian progress.

And I would observe, it does *not* consist in *making a public profession of religion* by joining the Church and associating with the people of God. It were an easy matter to make advances in the Divine life if this were all. To join the Church is undoubtedly the duty of every Christian, and it is a means which God has provided to aid his people in their efforts to improve in Christian character ; but the act itself does not constitute that improvement, nor does *Church* relation necessarily imply it. There are multitudes within the pale of the Visible Church who have never been, and who never will be, one whit the better for it.

Nor does Christian progress consist in attending to the external forms of religion. Forms are good in their place, and we cannot well do without them. They are auxiliary to devotion and

spirituality; but they of themselves do not constitute piety. There are multitudes who are very punctilious in their observance of forms, but who are entirely destitute of the Christian spirit. A man may be a very good formalist, while he is a very poor Christian, and, indeed, no Christian at all.

Nor does Christian progress consist in cultivating one particular grace to the neglect of all the rest. Nor by waking up occasionally to a sense of duty and making a few zealous, spasmodic efforts in the cause of Christ, to be succeeded by a long interval of sloth and inaction. A healthy growth in piety is not thus fitful. I do not say but that there may be some Christian progress where there is some want of uniformity and consistency on the part of professors; but there is not a full, healthy development of Christian character in its symmetrical and beautiful proportions.

But I would say, affirmatively, that Christian progress, as it should be, consists in a *steady, uniform, constant increase of all the Christian graces, cultivated in the heart and developed in the life*. The apostle Peter gives us a clear and comprehensive idea of what it implies in the first chapter of his second epistle. Says he, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and

to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." You see here the foundation or starting point of Christian progress is *Faith*. This is presupposed. Faith in Christ lies at the foundation of all piety. Without it, there can be nothing to build upon. As well might we expect a stalk of corn or wheat to spring up and bear fruit without a kernel or grain at the root to start it, as to expect the various Christian graces to spring up in the heart, and be developed to maturity, without faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," or exercise one good feeling, or perform one right action. Hence the apostle does not say to Christians if they would improve in character they must have faith, for this he takes for granted — they have that already, or they cannot be Christians; but presupposing the existence of faith, he goes on to tell them what they must add to it if they would make progress. And first he mentions "*virtue*." "Add to your faith virtue." The word translated virtue in this connection, has a meaning a little different from that usually attached to it. By virtue, we usually understand goodness in general. Here it has the meaning of the original word from which it is derived; viz., courage and fortitude. And this is essential to every Christian. It was peculiarly so in the time of the apostles. The early Christians were called to endure the most

violent opposition and persecution, often unto death ; and it required no small degree of courage to stand up in presence of their foes and declare themselves for Christ, and calmly look the king of terrors in the face. The situation of Christians in our times is different. We are not in danger of bodily harm on account of our faith ; but we live in the same wicked world, and have to encounter the same enmity of the wicked heart to holiness, and it sometimes requires as much fortitude to encounter a sneer, or smile of contempt, (which we shall be sure to meet with, if we are true to our Master) as to endure open persecution. Hence every Christian needs to add to his faith courage,—courage to profess Christ ; courage to *bear testimony* for Christ ; courage to take a decided stand for Christ in all circumstances, and in all kinds of company ; courage to speak, and courage to pray in presence of others when duty calls, without fearing the face of man. Many Christians fail of making any progress in religion for want of courage.

To virtue or courage is to be added "*knowledge*." A more perfect knowledge of God, of ourselves, of the Bible, of the path of duty, of the wiles of the adversary, and of the means we should employ for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. The Christian should be well versed both in the doctrines, and duties of religion. He

often fails to accomplish as much as he might, because of his ignorance of what religion requires. We can make no advance in any trade or profession in life, without a knowledge of the theory of that trade, and of its practical application. Much less can we in religion. The Christian should always be a learner. There is a vast field lying open before him, and he should never let a day pass without his adding something to his stock of religious knowledge. The Bible is a rich, an inexhaustible store-house of truth, from which we can draw at all times ; so that ignorance, especially of the practical part of Christianity, is wholly without excuse. We should derive wisdom from our observation and experience. We should look back upon our shortcomings, and our transgressions, and inquire into the cause of them, and learn a lesson for the future. We should make a note wherein we or others have succeeded in anything good, and pursue the same course again. Great learning in the sciences is by no means essential to piety, or to growth in piety ; but such knowledge as the Bible and the Holy Ghost teach, is essential, and that may be obtained by any one who can pray and read.

To knowledge, we are to add "*temperance.*" We are to use with moderation all the good things God has given us in his providence. We should be temperate in our eating, and in our drinking,

in our labors and in our recreations, in our mirth and in our grief, in our anticipation of worldly good, and in our fears of temporal calamity ; we should be temperate in the exercise of all our desires, appetites, and passions. An inordinate desire of any temporal good, and an unrestrained indulgence in any enjoyment, however innocent and lawful it may be in itself, is incompatible with any great advancement in Christian character.

To this the apostle enjoins "*patience*." For this grace there will be constant demand as long as we live in this world. There is a great deal here to irritate us, to vex us, and try our tempers ; and there is much severe suffering, both of body and of mind, all of which must be endured meekly, patiently, and without a murmur. It is "through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of heaven," and it is this tribulation which requires the exercise of patience. There is a striking relation between "*patience*," and "*temperance* ;" one requiring us to hold ourselves in check when in the enjoyment of good, and the other requiring us to hold our feelings and passions in check when suffering evil. It has been for the want of patience in the endurance of the greater or lesser ills of life, that many a Christian has stumbled and fallen. It is in patience we must possess our souls, and "run the race which is set before us."

To patience we are to add "*godliness*." God-

liness, in its primary sense, means the same thing as piety, and is a comprehensive term, including all the Christian graces which the apostle here enumerates. In this connection, it means not merely that we should be pious, for this is all along implied, but that we should *cultivate habitually a devout, godly state of mind*, that God should be in all our thoughts, and that we should have reference to his will in all we do.

And to godliness, or right affections of the heart toward God, we are to add, "brotherly kindness," an affectionate interest in our brethren, a love for them, a readiness to befriend them at all times, and a promptness to do them all the good in our power.

And to crown the whole, we are to add "*charity*." This means universal benevolence — love to God and love to man — universal good will. When this grace is superadded to all the rest, in its fulness and perfection, the character would be complete.

This, my friends, is what we are to understand by Christian progress, — a continual advancement in the divine life, adding one Christian grace to another, after the manner here indicated by the apostle, until charity or universal benevolence shall pervade the soul, and overshadow and control everything else. It is to this that you must constantly aim. A Christian who does this is a growing Christian; he is gaining self-control, be-

coming weaned from the world, triumphing over sin and Satan, and ripening for heaven. He is like a man on a journey, diligently urging his way forward, so that at the close of every day he perceives that he is considerably farther from his starting-point and nearer to his journey's end than he was in the morning.

Having explained what we are to understand by Christian progress, I shall now proceed to give you some directions, my young friends, how you may make this progress.

1. I would say in the *first* place, *it will require great, diligent, persevering effort*. The apostle prefaces the passage which we have been considering by the words, "giving all diligence," add to your faith all these Christian virtues. It is not an easy matter to make progress in our heavenly journey. It requires an agonizing strife to *enter* the strait gate, and not much less to persevere, and make progress afterward. There are a great many "Hills Difficulty" to ascend, and "By-path Meadows" to pass, and lions and giants and apostates and devils to encounter. Any one of these will arrest your course, unless you are very diligent, courageous, and persevering. Your way to heaven is much like that of a person going up a very steep hill covered with a glare of ice. He must make great effort, and exercise great diligence and care, not only to make any progress, but even to retain

what he gains. A little want of vigilance will cause him to lose his foothold, and he will slide back clear to the bottom of the hill. I would, therefore, my friends, have it deeply impressed upon your minds, at the very outset of your Christian course, that you will accomplish nothing without great diligence and effort.

2. You must *keep a strict and regular account with yourselves*. You should know where you are, whether you have made *any* progress, and how much. A traveler who has a long journey before him, does not go a great way before ascertaining how much distance he has traveled. He is often on the lookout for milestones, or something else, which will indicate whether he *is on the right road*, and is making suitable progress in it. Thus should the Christian be often taking observations to see if he is in the straight and narrow path, and to ascertain what advance he has made in his heavenly pilgrimage. And this is learned, not by looking without, but by looking within; by examining the temper and disposition of the mind, the current of the thoughts, the prevailing desires, the chief object of the affections. You should, my friends, take up each one of the Christian virtues separately, and inquire diligently and faithfully whether any traces of them can be found in the soul; and if so, to what extent. You will thus find out what grace is wanting

and must be supplied, and what one is weak and needs extra culture.

3. You should carefully *watch against temptation*. Remember that the natural bias of your hearts is to evil. The adversary is well aware of this fact, and will take advantage of it in every possible way. He will assail you on this side, and on that; sometimes appealing to one passion, and then to another; often covering up the deformity of sin by the robe of virtue, in a way very likely to deceive you, unless you are strictly on your guard. The world with its ten thousand allurements will solicit your attention, and entice you with its vanities. Worldly companions will seek to divert you from that straight and narrow path, to go a little way, "only a little way," with them in the broad road, telling you that you can easily forsake it at any time if you do not like it. Temptations in great numbers, and in great variety, are scattered thick all along your path in life, and it will be necessary for you to be constantly on your guard, lest you be betrayed into sin before you are aware of it, and lose more ground by one misstep, than you can regain for months, and perhaps for years.

4. You should faithfully and uniformly *use all the means God has given you to help you on your way*, and enable you to cultivate all the heavenly graces. He has given you the Bible, a sure and safe guide. Make it your constant companion,

consult it carefully and constantly. It will be a faithful counsellor in your difficulties and dangers, and a light to you in your darkness.

You enjoy the privilege of Christian intercourse, social meetings, and public worship; and more than all, the privilege of holding private intercourse with God in your closets. These are all great and precious privileges, and are admirably adapted to strengthen you, and assist you on your way to heaven. Prayer, especially, is the most efficient means which you can employ as an auxiliary in your heavenly pilgrimage. In prayer you go directly to Him who is the source of all light, and all strength, and He has promised to hear you and answer you. He will have compassion on your weakness, and let you lean upon His arm for support. He is aware of your blindness, and will take you by the hand and lead you. He knows your dangers, and will throw around you His shield for protection, and will say to your foes, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my children no harm." He is acquainted with your fears, and will say to you, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither be afraid, for I am with you, and will never leave you nor forsake you." All this, and a great deal more, God will do for you, and will help you in every way you need, to make progress toward your heavenly home, if you will but look to him in earnest prayer, and with childlike sim-

plicity and confidence, cast yourselves upon his almighty arm, and rely upon his grace and strength. Do this, and he will enable you to "mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint."

I shall conclude by urging upon you, very briefly, a few motives to Christian progress.

1. *The evidence you will have of your union to Christ, and friendship with God, and title to heaven*, will depend very much upon your progress in the Divine life. It is only those who follow on to know the Lord, and do his will, that have any right to call themselves his children. That professor who remains stationary, or falls back in his heavenly way, should at once begin to call in question the genuineness of his hope. As you value then a cheering, comforting hope of heaven, and the favor of God, let me urge you to be continually making progress and adding to your Christian graces.

2. By making progress in religion you will *enhance your present happiness*. Your experience has taught you already, if you are true disciples, that there is more real enjoyment in religion than there is in anything else. And you may be assured that the amount of your happiness will be in direct proportion to the degree of your piety, your conformity to Christ, and perfection in all the graces of the Spirit.

3. It is only by making progress that you *can hope to be extensively useful*. It is the heavenly-minded Christian only, he who adorns his profession, who grows in grace, who tramples the world under his feet, and "follows on" to know and serve the Lord, that has any great influence, as a Christian, over this wicked world. The consistent Christian (and none but a growing Christian is consistent,) is respected by the ungodly. They will listen to what he says, and will be influenced by it, while they will scorn that professor who lives as they do, and will treat with contempt any efforts he may put forth for their spiritual good.

Lastly, by making progress in religion you will *honor God*. You will be constant living witnesses to the excellency of his gospel, and the power of his grace, and through your daily walk, men will be led to "glorify your Father which is in heaven."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHRISTIAN IN PROSPERITY.

And in my prosperity I said, "I shall never be moved."
—Ps. 30: 6.

DAVID was a man of large and varied experience. There are few phases of human life with which he was not familiar. His origin was humble. He was the youngest of a large family, who moved in the common walks of life, and his occupation was to keep his father's sheep. Although he was a retired country boy, he early cultivated a taste for music and poetry. By some means he procured a harp, and became so skillful a performer as to attract the attention of the whole community. His skill in music was the occasion of his being brought out from his obscurity, and introduced at court; and he became the king's chief musician. From this time he experienced a great many vicissitudes. Sometimes he was treated with a great deal of kindness and respect, and sometimes he was treated with the greatest injustice and cruelty, and was frequently obliged to flee and hide himself to save his life. In

all his troubles he sought the Lord, and the Lord remembered and blessed him, and ultimately removed Saul from the throne of Israel, and placed David upon it in his stead. For a considerable time after he entered upon public life as king of Israel, everything seemed to go on prosperously. He was the idol of the people; and popular with everybody. He healed dissensions, united old opposing factions, and consolidated the nation. He was successful in war, commerce flourished under his administration, and wealth poured in upon him like a flood. His domestic relations were all happy, and nothing seemed wanting to complete his earthly felicity.

It was to this period of his life he referred when he wrote the words, "In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved." He felt confident in his position; he thought his mountain stood strong. And yet he *was* moved. His very prosperity, in which he confided so strongly, came very near proving his ruin. He became voluptuous and self-confident, and, in a measure, lost his sense of dependence on God. He let down his watch, fell into gross sin, lost his popularity with a portion of his subjects, and for awhile God forsook and humbled him. The severest trials were necessary to lead him to repentance and bring him back to God.

Most persons feel just as David did when they

are in prosperous circumstances. They too are self-confident, and think they shall never be moved. Israel felt so in their prosperity in Moses's day. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Like David, also, multitudes have found their confidence misplaced,—that their standing was never on so dangerous and giddy a height as when on the pinnacle of prosperity. It is often the case that a person is never in so perilous a situation as when he fancies himself most secure. Prosperity is what all men desire, and what all are seeking after. It is impossible *not* to desire it, in the sense in which the term is usually understood. Prosperity means, success in our efforts to obtain whatever we pursue, and such a state of present worldly circumstances as we consider desirable. This includes most kinds of temporal good, such as the possession of an abundance of property, and the means of gratifying our tastes and pleasures. It embraces also health, reputation, domestic comforts and endearments, honorable and happy friendly alliances, success in all our enterprises—in short, it includes all kinds of good which mankind regard as conducive to their temporal happiness. By the prosperous, we understand those who are so circumstanced in Providence that they can command all, or a considerable portion of these

sources of earthly good. It is not strange, therefore, that prosperity is the wish and pursuit of all. And yet, if they realized the dangers which are attendant upon that state, they would pause and tremble as they entered upon it. Solomon says, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." It may also be said, that the prosperity of wise men sometimes makes them fools, and thus prepares the way for their destruction, or at least for their fall.

In a previous chapter I mentioned some of the most prominent dangers that will be very likely to assail young Christians in their pathway to heaven. The dangers incident to a course of prosperity, I deferred to be discussed in a different connection, in order to give them greater prominence. We will consider them now. When I speak of dangers, I refer to spiritual dangers, those things which will retard the Christian in the divine life, destroy his spirituality, and hinder him on the way to heaven.

The first danger I shall mention to which unbroken prosperity exposes the Christian, is *complete absorption in worldly things*. When a man's affairs go right, when his business is prosperous, trade is good, his crops are abundant, his barns and granaries are full, and when almost everything he lays his hand upon seems to turn into money, then is the time, usually, when his

thoughts and his energies are all employed in accumulation. He is excited and stimulated by his success. While the wind blows fair, he spreads all his canvas to the favoring gale. He feels that no time is to be lost. Consequently, he is tempted to enlarge his business, start new schemes, make new investments, and the various enterprises in which he is engaged, make new demands upon his time and energies, so that he cannot find leisure to think of anything else. As his prosperity increases, and wealth pours in upon him like a flood, he is continually casting about him to see *what he shall do with it*. There never was a time when he had so much to do, and so many things to think of, as now.

As a natural consequence of all this, he is strongly tempted to neglect his religious duties, because he thinks he has no time to attend to them. He reads his Bible less; he prays in his closet less; he prays in his family less; he meditates upon Divine things less; he attends the prayer-meeting less; until, at length, nearly every religious duty is partially or wholly neglected. His thoughts are all on the world. The more he obtains of it, the better he loves it, and the more is he engaged to accumulate it. I have stated what is not *always*, but what is very often, the result of prosperity,—what its natural tendency is. It is a danger to which a Christian is most

eminently exposed when the world goes well with him. Unless he is very watchful, there is a fearful probability that he will be so much engrossed and absorbed in it, that he will neglect, or imperfectly perform, all religious duties, secret, social, and public, and almost forget that he has a soul.

Another danger of prosperity is *self-indulgence*. The natural tendency of the human heart is to seek to gratify luxurious tastes, appetites, lusts, and passions. Vast multitudes are held in check only by the stern hand of necessity. Luxuries are expensive, and many a man has been saved from ruin because he could not *afford* to ruin himself. Multitudes of young men have led honorable and virtuous lives while pressed by the hand of poverty, but who fell victims to self-indulgence as soon as prosperity smiled upon them. Persons who have any regard for honesty, will not indulge themselves in useless extravagances and effeminate, corrupting luxuries, if they can do it only on other people's money—they have too much honor and principle for that; but let them have means at command which they can call their *own*, and they will at once run into all manner of excess and dissipation. You recollect the purpose of the rich man whose grounds brought forth plentifully. He had "much goods laid up for many years," as he supposed; and he deliberately made up his mind to give himself over to a life of idleness,

luxury, and self-indulgence. He said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, — eat, drink, and be merry." He never thought of pursuing such an ignoble course until his prosperity had made him rich. A very large proportion of the reveling, extravagance, idleness, luxury, and dissipation to be found in our world can be traced back to prosperity as the first exciting cause.

Another danger of prosperity is *self-confidence*, and a feeling of independence and security. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" said the proud king, as he looked over the magnificent city which in his prosperity and success he had raised to be the wonder and admiration of the whole earth,—"Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power and for the honor of my majesty?" How strong and self-sufficient his prosperity made him! Yet it was not long before he was turned out to eat grass! It is only by God's blessing that men ever succeed in any enterprises they undertake. All their prosperity is of him; and yet there is no time when they feel their dependence so little, and their self-confidence so much, as when God is doing most for them. When did David lose sight of his dependence on God, and in his fancied security say, "I shall never be moved?" It was not when he was

tending the sheepfold in the wilderness, encountering single-handed the lion and the bear ; it was not when he went forth with a stone and a sling to fight Goliath of Gath ; it was not when he was driven into the wilderness by the persecution of Saul, and obliged to hide himself in thickets, dens, and caves ; for then he *felt* that his strength was only in the "living God." But it was when, crowned with honors and power, and loaded with wealth, he sat upon the throne of Israel. It was then he lost sight of his dependence on God, and felt confident and secure in himself. The rich man in the gospel, to whom I have already alluded, placed his confidence in his prosperity, "laid up for many years," to afford him happiness, and not in God. And it is generally so. There is no feeling more likely to follow or accompany prosperity, than independence and carnal security.

Another danger to which prosperity exposes the Christian is *pride*. If a man's wordly enterprises are crowned with success, and his wealth increases, he has the means of making a display, in dress, style, and equipage. The poor man, who has to labor hard for his daily bread, and can command little if any more than a supply for his bare necessities, will be likely to keep humble ; he has nothing to be proud of, and is consequently removed from temptation to this particular sin.

But a man who can look over a fine estate, and contemplate elegant buildings, beautiful gardens and pleasure-grounds, fertile fields, fruitful orchards and vineyards, large and beautiful flocks and herds of sheep, cattle, and splendid horses, with all their elegant trappings and establishments glittering with silver and gold, and say to himself, "All these are *mine*, and everybody knows that they are mine,—” such a man, I say, can hardly fail, without a very large share of the grace of God, to feel his heart lifted up with pride. There is no sin more natural to the human heart than this, and that Christian who can live in uninterrupted prosperity, and still keep uniformly humble, has made very great attainments. But the danger which most of all threatens him who is greatly prospered in life, is *idolatry*. Not that he will cause to be made an image of wood, or of stone, or any other material, and fall down and worship it, and pray to it, and offer it oblations. That is the idolatry of only ignorant, uncultivated minds,— but the idolatry of which I speak is the idolatry of the heart, which consists in placing our supreme affections on any object but God. There are quite as many idolaters in Christian lands, according to the population, as in heathen. If riches increase, it is natural to set our hearts upon them, and that is idolatry. Persons do not know how

hard it is to keep their affections from fastening on worldly good, when they have obtained it,—especially riches,—until they have made the experiment. Silver and gold are something that we can see and handle,—we can make immediate use of it, whenever we will, to procure whatever of good this world affords. God is unseen, and it is difficult, sometimes, for us to realise his presence, and to see his hand in every blessing we enjoy. Hence it is a very easy matter, as he is out of sight, to leave him out of mind, and to place in his stead, the creature comfort she has given us, and to make “gold our hope, and to say to the fine gold, thou art my confidence.” It is very strange, but no more strange than true, that the more God blesses mankind, and the more he prospers them, the less, as a general fact, is he thought of and loved, and he looks down with grief upon the objects of his constant munificence, and sees that they place their hearts upon what he gives them, and that they “have other gods before him.” How many a child of God has almost made shipwreck of his piety, and worshiped his property, for no other reason but because God had, in his great kindness, prospered him in his worldly concerns !

Thus you see, my young friends, how dangerous is prosperity. And yet, you are all wishing it,—and I sincerely wish it for you. But while I wish

it, I am filled with anxious forebodings, and trembling solicitude, on your account. If I knew that God would uniformly bless you in all your worldly concerns, I should feel far more solicitude for your spirituality, than I should, did I know that he would often thwart your schemes, blast your hopes, and send you disappointment instead of success. While, therefore, I wish you prosperity, it is on the ground that I hope and trust you will successfully guard against the dangers of which I have spoken, so that prosperity may be a blessing and not a curse to you. There is no *necessity* that prosperity should prove disastrous to your spiritual interests.

I shall now give you some hints designed to aid you in guarding against the dangers incident to prosperity.

1. In the first place, always bear in mind, that to prosper in the affairs of this life *is not the main end and object of your being*. Our observation of mankind would lead us to think it was, if we were to judge merely from what we see. But the light of nature, the Bible, and our own consciences teach us better. If we were to lie down and perish with the brutes, then there would be nothing better for us than to "eat and drink and enjoy the good of our labors," and to seek with all the energies of our souls and bodies, every good which this world can bestow. But this world is only the

threshold of our existence. Our home is in the future state. This world is only the vestibule to it, and the great business of life is to prepare for what lies beyond. If you will keep this fact constantly before you, and let it become a living, practical principle, it will serve both to moderate your excessive anxiety for worldly prosperity, and to guard against the dangers which naturally flow from it.

2. Keep in view the *uncertainty* of worldly prosperity, should God give it you. Great, and very sudden sometimes, are the changes which take place in our wordly circumstances and prospects. Because things go well with us to-day, is no proof they will go the same with us to-morrow. "Riches make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven." It is perfectly easy for God to turn the tide of our prosperity to the deepest adversity. And sometimes he does it without giving an hour's warning, and he may do it at any time. No prudence or forecasting of ours can prevent it. What lessons are almost daily taught us,—in conflagrations, cyclones, sea and land disasters, to say nothing of financial revolutions! What is true of wealth, is true of every form of wordly-good that we enjoy; our health, our honors, our popularity, our influence, our sensual enjoyments, our friends, and our domestic joys and comforts,—everything that

lights up this world with smiles, and which mankind set their hearts upon, God may cut off with a stroke. Hence we should desire all sublunary good with moderation, and enjoy it "as though we possessed it not," for "the fashion of this world passeth away," and none of us can tell "what shall be on the morrow." A constant sense of the entire uncertainty of worldly prosperity, can hardly fail, I think, to guard you against those dangers which almost always attend it.

3. Never for a moment lose sight of your *dependence on God*, for the original possession, and for the continuance of earthly good. Remember that you can procure nothing of yourselves. "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it." If God smiles, we prosper; if he frowns, we cannot prosper, take whatever precautions we may. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away."

4. Let success in life prompt to *a sense of deeper obligation, and to a more faithful discharge of duty*. Instead of letting your mercies be the cause of your forgetting God, let them be an occasion for your remembering him with gratitude and love. It was the language of the Psalmist, when in a heavenly frame of mind, in view of the divine goodness, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits." Let it be your language. Let a sense of God's kindness to you

prompt you to a more constant filial obedience. If God prospers you, be more constant and earnest in prayer, and in studying the scriptures; and by all means continue your prompt and punctual attendance upon the worship and ordinances of God's house, the social prayer-meeting, and all the means of grace. Who should be grateful? who should be obedient? who should be prayerful? who should make a special effort to lead a godly, righteous, sober, and consistent life, if not those whom God has laid under peculiar obligations by granting them prosperity?

5. *Guard against selfishness, by practising enlarged benevolence in proportion as God prospers you.* It is a melancholy fact, that very few Christians increase their contributions to the Lord's treasury in proportion to their success in life. If their property or their income increases annually, ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred per cent, they *don't think* of increasing their liberality in the same ratio. A person is usually much more liberal, in proportion to his means, when he is worth \$1,000, than when he is worth \$10,000. When we go to a man worth ten thousand dollars to get a contribution to a benevolent object, we never expect to get from him as much as we do in the aggregate from ten of his neighbors, worth only one thousand each. And yet, he can better afford it than they, because they have ten families

to support, and he has only one ; and besides, he has a little capital to fall back upon, in case of sickness or disability, and they have not. This is more palpably true, in most cases, when a man is worth his fifty, or a hundred thousand dollars, and more still if he is worth a million. Let me urge you to guard against that penuriousness which prosperity so unreasonably engenders, by following strictly the apostle's rule : — viz., by laying by for God, and sacred purposes, as the Lord prospers you ; *i. e.*, in the same *proportion*, and not a meagre *pittance* of that prosperity, as many do.

6. *Bear in mind that you are after all but "stewards of God,"* and that what you receive in your prosperity, is only a *trust* committed to you, of which you must give a strict account. The ten talents which God enables you to accumulate from the one entrusted to you, are all God's talents still, and the whole ten will be required at your hands by and by. He will not let you embezzle nine of them for hoarding, or for lavish and unnecessary expenditure on yourself and family, and then call you a "good and faithful servant." Ever keep the day of reckoning in view, and I think it must exert a favorable influence toward guarding you against the dangers of prosperity.

7. *Often call to mind the solemn and affecting truth that you must die.* However great and however prosperous you may become, and al-

though no reverses may come upon you, yet the time in which you can enjoy your worldly good is very brief. God may not say to you this night, or this year, "Thy soul shall be required of thee," but the time must come when he *will* say it,— then whose shall those things be which were accumulated in your prosperity? You can carry none of them into the eternal world with you. Ask yourselves what advantage will it be to you, when you are struggling on the bed of death, in conflict with man's last enemy, to think that you have labored successfully to accumulate the good things of *this* world, all of which must be left behind? Worldly prosperity is always uncertain, but at death it must surely cease. Who that knows he is to live through eternity, would be satisfied with a portion which is unsatisfying in its nature, and which he must soon leave to he knows not whom? In order, therefore, to moderate your elation in prosperity, often check yourselves by putting the question, "What will all this avail me when I come to die?"

Lastly, *keep heaven in view*. Contrast earthly good, with your better portion. How does everything pertaining to this world dwindle to nothing, when compared to an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven! If we ever get to heaven, with what astonishment must we look back, and contemplate the anxiety we felt for prospering in the things of

this life ! Often think, then, of the glories which are hereafter to be revealed, and of the portion laid up for you in the skies if you are the real children of God ; and then this world, with all its attractions, cannot fail to dwindle to its own insignificance, and you will set lightly by its trifles, while your aspirations will be for those joys which are unseen and eternal, and which will never fade away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHRISTIAN IN ADVERSITY.

In the day of adversity consider.— ECCL. 7:14.

THIS is a changing world. There is nothing permanent about it. The alternation of day and night, sunshine and clouds, the changes of the seasons, all the mutations of material things, are but emblems of the changes mankind are constantly experiencing in their circumstances and prospects. To-day it is pleasant. The sun shines gloriously in the heavens, and "rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." There is not a cloud to darken the horizon; the birds sing sweetly and merrily in the trees; the whole face of nature smiles, and all the beings we see, seem joyous and happy. But who can tell what shall be on the morrow? Very likely, before then, the heavens may gather blackness, the hail and rains may descend, the winds may blow, and the storm may rage, all nature may wear as dark an aspect as it now does a bright and beautiful one.

Just so it is in the moral world. To-day we may be rejoicing in prosperity, happy in our

health and strength, happy in our worldly circumstances, happy in our friends, and happy in our prospects so far as we can reasonably anticipate the future. But all this affords no guaranty for to-morrow. On the morrow God may bring as sudden and as gloomy a change in our outward circumstances as ever came over the face of nature, and hardly a vestige of our former prosperity may remain. It is an ordinance of Providence that this should be a world of "lights and shadows," that good and evil should be intermixed, and that one should succeed the other just in that time and in that order which the inscrutable will of God may see best, without either asking our leave, or even informing us how or when these changes are to occur. We are therefore to take the good and the ill things of life as they come, and get good out of them all, and improve them so that they may answer, both to us and to others, the purposes for which they are sent. Each phase of life has its appropriate considerations, feelings, and duties.

I think, my young friends, there is no doubt but some, and probably all of you will hereafter have more or less practical experience of the dark phases of human life. It is by no means probable that every day of your future will be all sunshine. It would be very strange if your path through this world should be always smooth, and strewn with

flowers. There is, indeed, a vast difference in the amount of temporal good and evil allotted to individuals here, even to God's own children. Some are very much prospered, and others seem to be almost perpetually under the frown of Providence. But there are very few who do not have to pass through many dark, distressing scenes; and I think I can safely predict that there is not one of you who will not know what trouble is before you die. The forms in which it comes may and probably will be very diverse, although there is a class of trials common to all mankind, and from which, of course, none can hope to be exempt. I do not wish to throw a damper over your spirits, as you are now in the buoyancy of youth, looking forward probably with sanguine hopes to a prosperous and happy future, by holding up before you a gloomy picture. The prospects before you are not all, nor chiefly, dark by any means. If an artist could be inspired to paint a picture which should truthfully represent human life as it will hereafter be realized in the experience of each of you, there is reason to believe that many bright and cheering points would illumine it; but it is useless to conceal the fact, that there would probably be drawn on that canvas some scenes which would cause you to shrink back with fear and trembling. It is well, therefore, that you should take a candid, rational view of your earthly so-

jour, and bear in mind that, while you are hoping for good and seeking after it, evils of some kind are in store for you, and it may be evils of a very great magnitude. I say it is well to bear this in mind, for if you do, you will not be taken by surprise when they come, and you will not be altogether unprepared for them.

I. I will in the *first* place mention some of the *different forms* in which you are liable to encounter adversity in your future life.

The term adversity implies some very serious calamity, or trial, or affliction, which essentially mars our happiness and inflicts great distress, mental or corporeal.

1. I would mention first, *bodily pain or injury*. This is an evil to which all are subject, and one which, to some extent, all must suffer. There is not a day passes in which we do not suffer something in this way. But our ordinary daily sufferings are so slight, and transient, they are not worthy of being taken into the account in this connection. But how liable are we all to suffer excruciating bodily anguish, which no skill of the physician, nor the power of medicine, can effectually remove. There are pains in the head, pains in the chest, pains in the limbs, pains in the eyes, and other different organs of the body, and sometimes they are of so severe a character as to mar every enjoyment; and if they are continued with-

out alleviation, they render life itself a burden. Such was one of Job's severest calamities. He was covered from the crown of his head to the sole of the foot with sore boils, so that he could neither stand, sit, or lie down without experiencing the intensest agony! He bore his other calamities with fortitude; but he quailed under bodily suffering, so that his life became a loathing to him, and he prayed that he might die. There have been few sufferers like Job; but there have been multitudes, and there are multitudes living at this very moment, whose sufferings are akin to his. There are many persons, and I have seen such, who know not what it is to be free from pain from the beginning of the year to the end of it; days, months, and even years of sickness and languishing are apportioned to them. Severe bodily pain is an evil to which we are all liable, and one which doubtless many of us are doomed to suffer intensely before we die.

Connected with bodily pain, there is often bodily *injury*, involving the loss of sight, or the loss of hearing, or the loss of limb. How many are maimed for life by accidents on railroads and steamboats — in manufacturing establishments, by being caught in machinery — at the raising and falling of buildings — disasters at fires, and ten thousand other ways, according as God may see fit to order his providence. In a moment, in the

twinkling of an eye as it were, the most joyous prosperity has been changed to the darkest adversity !

Who of you can tell, my young friends, but that *you* may in the course of future life, be called to suffer some calamity of this kind, so as to cut off all your earthly prospects, and render you helpless and dependent ?

2. Another form in which adversity may come is the *loss of property*. Supposing God should prosper you in the employment of your hands, or in your chosen occupation for life, and fill your basket and store-house,—should let your property accumulate so that you may consider yourself independent, and even rich,—you are by no means secure. A disastrous fire, a revulsion in the commercial world, the failure of corporations, the bankruptcy of those who are indebted to you, and the worthlessness of their securities, or an unknown defect in your title to real estate — any or all of these causes may bring you down from affluence to poverty, and you may be reduced to the condition of your blessed Master, not having “where to lay your head,” and even “want may come upon you like an armed man.” Thousands and tens of thousands in our country have experienced all this within the last few years, and thousands more will experience the same in years to come, and you may be of the number.

3. Another form of adversity may be *domestic afflictions in the loss of near and dear friends*, for affliction is not improperly called adversity. If there is any one cause more than another which makes the world literally "a vale of tears," it is the sundering of the ties which bind us to those we love. The loss of property is nothing to the loss of a companion, a child, a parent, a brother, or a sister, unless a person has become so sordid as to make gold his idol. Nothing can make this world look so sad, and desolate, as to follow to the grave the remains of those whose hearts are knit with ours.

There is a bitterness in that sorrow which weeps for loved ones laid in the grave, which is tasted in no other cup. Go and ask the widow, or the widowed husband, or the stricken parents bereft of their children, what in their opinion constitutes the essence of adversity, and their tears will tell you. There needs to be "no speech nor language;" "their voice" need "not be heard;" the silent but quivering lip, and the heaving bosom will reveal the truth that no desolation can exceed what they experience. This species of trial is certain to befall every one of us, unless we ourselves should be the first called away. The separation of friends by death is inevitable. The sun is not more certain to rise to-morrow than it is certain that our hearts are some time to be riven

by the stroke of the fell destroyer. The hour of our anguish may be deferred, but come it will in God's appointed time. "It is appointed to all men once to die." We shall either leave our friends to weep for us, or we shall be left to weep for them. In either case, the silken cords of affection which now bind our hearts together have got to be sundered, and the tears of grief are ere long sure to overflow.

I have spoken of some of the most prominent forms, my young friends, in which stern adversity may possibly visit you in future life; viz., bodily suffering, loss of property, the blighting of all your worldly prospects, and the desolation of grief occasioned by the loss of beloved friends. There are other trials common to humanity, such as disappointment in our fondly-cherished plans, malice of enemies, ingratitude and unkind treatment from those to whom we have shown favors, domestic troubles and secret griefs of which the world cannot be cognizant, — all of which may or may not be yours in the future. I pray God to avert them from you so far as may be consistent with your highest good; but that you will be exempt from all kinds of adversity during your earthly pilgrimage, is more than we are to hope for, and perhaps more than we ought to desire.

II. I shall now, in the *second* place, speak of the *spirit* with which you should meet adversity when it comes.

1. And I would say *first*, particularly to young men,—meet it with a *manly* spirit. If troubles come, do not wilt and quail before them like a petted child when it meets with a slight accident, or when its toys are taken away. Not that I would have you cultivate a stoicism which looks with indifference upon passing events, whether they be joyous or sad. A person without emotion is to be pitied. But what I mean is that you should meet the trials of life with a good degree of fortitude, and not wilt like a hot-house plant the moment it is touched by the frost. If you meet with an accident, bear it like a man; if called to suffer bodily pain, endure it like a man; if misfortune overtakes you, and your property is destroyed or taken away, do not, in effeminate weakness, sit down and say, "My all is gone; I am undone for life; it is of no use for me to try any longer." Be ashamed to let especially the lighter trials of life, like loss or disappointment in regard to business or property, crush you. Rouse up and look misfortune in the face; not in a defiant spirit, for misfortune is one of God's messengers, but look upon her as a friend; and although she wears a frown upon her brow, see if you cannot detect a smile upon her lips. Her errand may be one of love after all.

2. *Secondly*, meet adversity with a *cheerful* spirit. This you will be likely to do if you meet it with a manly spirit. However great our trials, they

should not make us melancholy. To be cheerful, is a duty we owe both to ourselves and to others. To despond, and suffer ourselves to be made wretched and gloomy by any adverse occurrences, is both useless and sinful. There is no day so dark but that we can see to go about; the clouds over our heads are never so dense but they admit some rays of the sun to pass through them. So the moral atmosphere is never so dark but there are some rays of light to cheer the gloom; and if you are tempted to despondency, you should remember that there is still left more of good than of evil, and you have more occasion for smiles than you have for tears.

3. *Thirdly*, You should meet adversity with a *submissive* spirit. All events are ordered by an all-wise, though inscrutable Providence. "The Lord reigneth," and doeth his pleasure in all places, and with all beings; and that is enough for us. Our language should ever be, "Thy will be done." "Even so, Father." God knows best what we should suffer, and in his wisdom and his goodness we should cheerfully and implicitly confide. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," said the patient sufferer; "blessed be the name of the Lord." "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." Aaron, when bereaved of his sons, "held his peace." The Psalmist, when suffering chastisement at the hand of God, says, "I was dumb, I

opened not my mouth because thou didst it." The Lord Jesus, our great exemplar, endured afflictions a thousand fold greater than ever fell to the lot of humanity, and we read that in the depth of his sorrows, he fell on his face and prayed: "O, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." And this should be the language of every one suffering adversity.

III. We will now, in the *third* place, direct our attention to some considerations which tend to *ameliorate adversity*, and light up the darkness which it naturally throws around us.

And a prominent one is, *our trials do not come by chance*, neither are they inflicted by an enemy; but are by the appointment of our best friend. God not only foreknows, but foredetermines all events. Our afflictions are as much by his appointment as our blessings are, and should be regarded by us as an essential part of his wise and benevolent plan for administering his moral government over his creatures. We know that God has a good and sufficient reason for inflicting upon us every ill that we suffer, and with this we should be content.

Our trials, be they ever so great, are nothing in comparison with what we deserve. When we place our afflictions by the side of our *sins*, we cannot but be filled with admiration of that good-

ness which deals so gently with us We should have no reason to complain were God to take from us every comfort, and send us nothing but chastisements; but instead of it, he continues most of our blessings, even in the darkest times, and wields the rod with a tender Father's hand, and strikes only a few and gentle blows.

Another sustaining consideration in adversity is, God is *dealing with us in chastisement for our good*, and not because he takes any pleasure in our suffering. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, but for their profit" — that is, he takes no satisfaction in giving his children pain, and would not do so were it not necessary for our good. What a different aspect does this consideration give to earthly trials,—to think that they are all dictated by kindness, and have their origin in parental love. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The sweet poet Cowper says :—

" Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way,
Might I not with reason fear
I should be a castaway ? "

There is another consideration for the true Christian, calculated to cheer the hours of adversity ; and that is, *they will shortly be past*. These trials and these sorrows are not to be perpetual ; they are only temporary evils, which ere long will be alleviated or removed. These darksome nights will be succeeded by the cheerful light of day. Whether it will be in *this* world we cannot tell. It is not much matter ; but we know the period will come, if we are God's children, when every pain we suffer will be removed, every sigh that heaves our bosoms will be hushed, every tear will be wiped away, and every dark and dreary scene will be exchanged for one of light, cheerfulness, and joy. Let these considerations cheer and animate us, my friends, and sustain our spirits, if now, or in after life, God may see fit to cause us to pass under the cloud of adversity.

IV. In the *fourth* place I will specify some of the *uses* to be made of adversity.

One prominent use we should make of adversity should it come upon us is, *to institute the inquiry why God is contending with us*. As I have already stated, God has a wise and benevolent object in view when he wields the rod. This object relates in part to us as individuals. It is for us to inquire What is it? What sin do we cherish and habitually commit that he wishes to correct? What languishing Christian grace does

he wish to revive in our hearts? What neglected Christian duty does he design to prompt us to discharge? Doubtless some one and perhaps all of these objects he has in view, and designs to secure. We should lose no time in ascertaining what God means when he speaks to us in this way, and as dutiful children, obey his voice, and put in practice the lesson he gives us. This chastisement is for our profit, and we should see to it that we do not lose the blessing it was designed to secure to us. God often makes use of adversity to turn our thoughts from this world to himself. This world is apt to engross our thoughts and affections, so that sometimes the Christian almost forgets that there is any other world besides this, and nothing short of severe measures will prove effectual to reclaim him. Let us, then, ask ourselves, Have we not become too worldly-minded? and are not these severe chastisements the means God is using to detach our affections from earth, that they may return to him?

Another use we should make of adversity is, it should *lead us to think more of heaven*. In prosperity we often lose sight of it, we cease to desire it, we are too well satisfied with what we have here and hope to obtain. But when trials come, and our good things are taken away, then we see and feel the need of something better and more substantial. In heaven, the Christian's por-

tion, there are no pains, no losses, no disappointments, no separation of friends, no toil, no solicitude, no sighs, and no tears. All is peace and blessedness there. It is passing strange that the world, so unsatisfying in its nature, so uncertain, so deceptive, and so fleeting, should ever come between us and heaven. But it often does, and almost entirely hides its glories from our view. When, therefore, God takes this world from us, or any of its enjoyments on which we had placed our affections, our thoughts and our hearts should immediately go upward and fasten upon our better inheritance. If heaven is ours, how insignificant are all our losses, sufferings, and trials here !

I shall close this chapter with one more thought ; and that is, whenever adversity comes upon you, my young friends, *put all your confidence in God*. Look to him for grace and strength to enable you to exercise your courage, your fortitude, your Christian philosophy. Philosophy without grace cannot sustain you ; but grace and strength from God can sustain you even without philosophy. He alone can enable you to bear the burdens which he himself imposes. And if you will confide in him he will do it. He has graciously promised that he will. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee." Let the great use of your trials be to lead you nearer to God ; to place an implicit

confidence in his wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and truth. He will cause light to shine out of darkness, and will bring good out of apparent evil. He will make all things work together for your highest good in time and in eternity. Trust in the Lord, and then, although the foundations of the earth should be shaken, you have nothing to fear.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHRISTIAN MANLINESS.

Be strong and show thyself a man.—1 KINGS 2: 2.

THESE words are a part of King David's dying charge to the youthful Solomon. David was now an old man. For a period of forty years he had swayed the scepter as sovereign over Israel. He was now about to resign it to his son, and as the days drew near that he should die, he called Solomon to his bedside, and gave him the following charge: "I go," said he, "the way of all the earth; be thou strong, therefore, and *show thyself a man*. And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself." Solomon was now a mere youth, about twenty years old, and upon him were soon to devolve cares and responsibilities of the greatest magnitude. It is not surprising, therefore, that David felt a tender solicitude for the youth, and took this opportunity,

just as he was leaving the world, to give this his affectionate, paternal counsel, the first sentence of which is, "*be strong and show thyself a man.*" David meant by this, that Solomon should cultivate, and exhibit in his deportment and actions, a noble, upright, dignified, manly spirit and bearing in his intercourse with his fellow-men.

The counsel David gave to Solomon is always appropriate, especially to young men coming upon the stage of life. The *first* requisite for forming a useful character in the world, is *piety*; and the second is *manliness*. The two are very nearly allied. A person cannot be a very good Christian without being manly; and it is impossible to be perfectly manly in the fullest and best sense of that term, without being a Christian.

Manliness is a term that expresses dignity, firmness, courage, integrity, principle, decision, nobleness of soul. Perhaps we can define it as well as any way by its *opposites*. It is opposed to childishness. "When I became a man," says Paul, "I put away childish things." He did not make it the business of life to amuse himself with toys. It is opposed to effeminacy, — a fear of coming in contact with the world, lest in the severe conflicts of life, some trifling injury may possibly be sustained, especially to the personal appearance, — a spirit that betrays a greater solicitude for the dressing of the hair, the fitting of a

garment, the fairness of the complexion, and the whiteness and softness of the hands, than for any adorning of the inner man, all of which may be expressed by the modern term, "dandyism."

Manliness is opposed to cowardice, which is always afraid to stir out of doors because there is "a lion in the street."

It is opposed to obsequiousness,—a servile fawning around an individual or a party, to court favor, or to obtain an office.

It is opposed to rudeness, either in speech or behavior toward our superiors, inferiors, or equals.

It is opposed to two-facedness and duplicity; *i. e.*, being one thing in a man's presence, and another behind his back.

It is opposed to *hypocrisy* in every shape, and in all circumstances.

It is opposed to fickleness,—a constant changing of opinions and course of conduct, so that a knowledge of what a man was yesterday, gives you no clue to what he is to-day, or what he will be to-morrow.

Manliness is opposed to rowdyism,—boisterousness in the streets, disturbing the peace of neighborhoods, and the rest of honest, quiet people at night, by loud demonstrations of mirth, and outlandish noises.

It is opposed to *meanness* in every form and degree; — meanness in buying; meanness in sell-

ing; meanness in taking advantage of others' ignorance or necessities; meanness in shirking responsibility; meanness in enjoying anything that is pleasant or useful, and refusing to pay for it because others will; meanness in opposing a good and necessary object, because it will cost something; meanness in eaves-dropping; meanness in prying into and meddling with other people's matters, and then going around the streets and talking about them.

It is opposed to miserly penuriousness,—close-calculating, close-fisted covetousness.

It is opposed to envy, ill-will, censoriousness, back-biting, and everything that goes to disturb the harmony of society.

All the things which I have mentioned are directly the opposite of manliness. True manliness looks down upon them from a lofty elevation, with sincere pity and a virtuous contempt.

I think, from this negative description, you may get a pretty correct idea of what I understand by *manliness*.

I will now proceed, my young friends, to give some directions how your manliness should be exemplified.

1. One way in which manliness should be exemplified is in your *deportment and general demeanor*. Carefully avoid that effeminateness and foppishness in your dress, manners, and conversa-

tion, to which young men are sometimes prone, and which is in general a public advertisement of a want of correct taste, mental culture, and good sense. It is unquestionably the duty of everybody to pay some attention to their personal appearance. There is an evident propriety in our being not only comfortably, but decently, and even tastefully clad.

Neither religion nor manliness requires a young man, or an old man, to be a sloven, and to outrage the feelings of civilized society, by dressing like a savage, or by disregarding the habits and customs of the community in which he lives. Our clothes should be of such materials as to combine decency, comfort, and economy ; and made in such a style as to attract no particular notice, either for their elegance or the want of it. And this is sufficient. But to see a young man giving his attention to fine clothes, studying the latest fashions, and following them to an extreme, giving himself more concern about the setting of his coat, and the texture of the cloth of which it is made, than he does about the texture of his *mind*, or the state of his heart, is so unworthy of one who pretends to call himself a man, that it is painfully disgusting. Such a one thinks, by making a display on his person of the gloss of his apparel, and the skill of his tailor, that he is making a favorable impression on those who look at him. Never was there

a greater mistake. While the poor simpleton imagines that he is an object of universal admiration, he little dreams that all sensible people are looking upon him with mingled feelings of pity and disgust. Says a very plain-spoken, sensible writer: * "No character is more despicable than that of a fop, for it implies the most diminutive littleness of soul; since it is evident that if the man had more mind, he would serve the devil in a bolder way. The evil one has set him about the smallest of all business, as either not competent, or not inclined to great undertakings. There is something so beneath the dignity of manhood, so unworthy of our high origin, of our varied powers, and of our momentous destiny, in concentrating the faculties of the soul on questions of dress, fashion, and personal appearance, that I believe no young man can respect himself, as I am sure he cannot be respected by others, who is thus characterized." Words fitly spoken. Not only in your dress, but in your manners and conversation be manly. In society, try to talk about something besides trifles. Never condescend to use vulgar or slang phrases,—a custom quite too common, even among those who would be thought gentlemen. They are demoralizing, useless, and undignified. Feel yourselves above telling, or

* Rev. W. W. Patton, D. D.; see his "Young Man," p. 130.

even listening to, foolish and indecent stories and anecdotes. Leave all these for the amusement of buffoons, — that class of persons who sustain a middle rank between apes and men. Let there be such a contrast between your carriage and conversation and theirs, that none can fail to see it. Respect yourselves, and you will be respected even by the low-bred and vulgar. Show that you are disgusted with their folly, and they will soon cease to trouble you. There is nothing this class of people shun more than true manliness; and if you evince it in your deportment, they will very soon discover it, and let you alone. Treat everybody with true politeness and courtesy. Never return an insult, and you will not be often insulted. The archangel Michael was polite, even to the devil, as we read in James; and his example is worthy of imitation. How sublime and dignified was he in his reply to the insolence of the adversary! It is evident that the devil insulted him. Instead of "giving him as good as he sent" (as the common phrase is), he replied, "The Lord rebuke thee." How would the angel have let himself down, had he returned railing for railing!

Let your manliness *stand out prominent in all your intercourse with the world*. There will hardly a day pass without its being called into requisition. Let it appear in your frankness. Some men always act and speak on the non-com-

mittal system. They never let you know what they believe or disbelieve ; what they approve or disapprove ; whether they will forward an enterprise or oppose it ; whether they favor the interests of *this* party or that one ; whether they love you or *hate* you. Now there is nothing manly in all this. When you see a man going about in a mask, and under a cloak, you have reason to be afraid of him, and to suspect that he has sinister designs, either upon *you* or somebody else. How much more noble and manly is it to avow your opinions, and show your colors, and let the world know who and what you are, and what ground you stand upon in regard to all subjects in which you and the public have a mutual interest, and where you are expected to exert an influence. If you are ashamed of your opinions, and do not avow them on that account, abandon them. If you are afraid to avow them, be ashamed of your cowardice. If you are unwilling to avow them because you wish to make some private capital out of your non-committalism, then you should blush for your selfishness. I do not mean, that in order to be frank, you must tell all you know and think, about things which ought to be kept private ; nor about matters with which others have no concern, but to gratify an idle and impertinent curiosity. On the contrary, frankness demands that you tell, plainly, all such intermeddlers with what does not

belong to them, that there are good reasons why you should keep your own counsel.

Let your manliness appear *in your ingenuousness in acknowledging, without equivocation or reserve, when you have been mistaken, or done wrong;* and if you have intentionally or unintentionally injured any one, let your manliness appear in making all suitable apology and reparation. There is hardly any mistake into which mankind are more frequently led by their pride, than the notion that it is degrading to confess when they have been in error, or have done wrong; whereas nothing can be more manly. Rather than do it, many will meet in deadly combat, and blow each other's brains out!

Let your manliness appear *in all your business transactions.* Here it should stand out in bold relief. The manner in which you deal with your fellow-men will leave an indelible impression on their minds. There is nothing that will make a more favorable impression among honorable business men, than an honest, truthful, candid, liberal, straightforward manliness in your buying and selling, and keeping and settling accounts; and there is nothing that leaves a *worse* impression than for one who professes to be a *man*, especially a professed Christian, to higggle and manœuvre and misrepresent and conceal, and to take advantage and

cheat, in making a bargain. There are some men who affect respectability who will do this.

Let me earnestly exhort you, my young friends, in all your business transactions in future life, to show yourselves men. Disdain to descend to the low, mean, and petty, not to say dishonest artifices to which some will resort, to turn a few pennies from another man's pocket into their own. If you have an article to sell, do not represent it to be any better than it is. If it has defects, do not leave the purchaser to find them out if he can, especially after you have concealed them by thrusting them under cover ; but do you point them out, exactly as they are. Never ask a little more for an article than it is worth, because you think the person you are dealing with is ignorant of the market value. When buying an article have the candor to acknowledge whatever good qualities it may possess, and do not try to make it appear to have defects which you know it has not. A *man* will never do such things, and you will not, if there is anything manly about you. Let honor, truthfulness, and strict integrity characterize everything you say and do, in all the affairs of life, so that there never shall be occasion to say, concerning any one of you, "he is a person that needs watching."

Again, let your manliness be manifested *in your always taking a decided stand for principle* and for

right, however unpopular such a course may be. Always defend the down-trodden, and take part with the oppressed against the oppressor. Let your voice be heard for justice and equity, and for good order, and good rulers, and good laws, and the *execution* of good laws, irrespective of party or personal considerations. Espouse the *right*, even though you should have to stand alone, as Abdiel did — as represented by Milton — when, unsupported by a single individual, he uttered his voice in solemn protest against the usurpation of Satan and his compeers when they revolted in heaven. Such a stand may cost you your popularity, or deprive you of office, in possession or in prospect. It may subject you to jeers, and taunts, and persecution, even as it did Abdiel. But what of that? A man will stand up for the *right*, though all the powers of darkness, and their allies in this world, with Satan at their head, should rise up against him. He that will not do it is devoid of principle, — a poor, selfish, craven wretch, and not worthy the name of a man.

Again, let your manliness be exemplified in your *having a mind and opinions of your own*, and by showing that you can *adhere* to them. Dare to think for yourselves, my young friends; if you would be *men*. It is proper for you to listen to what others say, and to be influenced by their arguments, if they are good ones;

but not otherwise. When forming your opinions, act with deliberation and independence. Do not believe this dogma or that, merely because somebody tells you to; for perhaps to-morrow somebody else will tell you to believe directly the opposite, and thus you will be "carried about by the sleight and cunning craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." I say think for yourselves, and form your own opinions, and when you have formed them, *adhere* to them, unless you become convinced that they are wrong, and then *change* them, and have the manliness to tell the world that you have done so, and don't be ashamed of it. Never, in any case, be persuaded to do violence to the dictates of conscience. You will often be assailed by temptation to violate your principles. Do not be afraid to hold up your head, look your tempter in the face, and answer him with a decided NO. In politics, morals, and religion act consistently, and carry out your principles, independently of demagogues, scheming politicians, or the devil, and *be men* in spite of them all.

Again, let your manliness be exemplified in your *high and noble aims in life*. God did not create you to be drones and idlers. He has given each one of you a part to act; there is an important niche for each one of you to fill. Your influence and your labors are wanted in the world

for promoting the glory of God, and the interests of the great family of man. Seek, then, some honorable and useful employment. Even if wealth should flow in upon you, or a fortune should be left you, so that there should be no pecuniary necessity for your ever moving a finger, it would make not the least difference. You have no *right* to stand all day in the vineyard idle, or to spend your time on trifles, or in ignoble pursuits. It is sinful and unmanly to do so. Live not for present, selfish gratification, but have constantly before you an object worthy of your exalted nature, and your immortal destiny.

But the most important direction for your "showing yourselves men" remains to be given.

Let your manliness be manifested in your *fidelity as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ*. All your manliness in the affairs of this world will be of little avail, comparatively, if you are found wanting here. You have enlisted in a noble warfare, under a leader who styles himself the "Captain of your salvation," and it now remains for you to be strong, of good courage, active, vigilant, self-sacrificing, prompt, and persevering. The warfare in which you are engaged, my young friends, you will find, before you are through with it, to be no trifling matter. The enemies with whom you are to contend are numerous, artful, and powerful, and you will never vanquish them

unless you are alive to a sense of your solemn responsibilities, and "put on the whole armor of God," and "fight manfully the good fight of faith," and "quit yourselves like men."

Always be ready, in all places and in all circumstances, to *let the world know on what ground you stand*; that you are committed for life, and for eternity, to the cause of truth and righteousness. Your flag has emblazoned upon it the cross of Christ, and you should glory in it. Instead of keeping it concealed, unfurl it and give it to the wind, and let it wave in the breeze, so that all the world can see it; and let both your foes and your friends know that you will die sooner than see that flag struck or dishonored. Your leader is the Lord Jesus, and let his name cause your hearts to thrill with joy, and to beat with ardor for him and his cause, as the name of Bonaparte inspired the hearts of the French soldiers, and as the names of Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan gave courage and enthusiasm to our brave boys in the late war.

A manly soldier *wears the uniform given him, and keeps his armor bright, and ready for use at any moment*. So are you to put on the gospel panoply, "the breastplate of righteousness," the "helmet of salvation," and taking the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," you are to

be ready to fight the good fight of faith, and to go forth to conflict at a moment's warning.

A manly soldier is *vigilant*. He is often put on guard as a sentinel. He never sleeps at his post; but his eyes and his ears are open that he may obtain a knowledge of the first approach of danger. So are you to be constantly on the lookout for your spiritual enemies, — enemies from without and enemies from within. You are told to "be vigilant, for your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour," and you are informed that the world, the flesh, and the devil, have formed a triple alliance to oppose Christ, and thwart his cause.

A manly soldier will *cheerfully and patiently endure toil, privation, and hardship for his country*. He will live on the coarsest fare, sleep in his blanket on the cold ground or hot ground, under the open sky, and not utter a word of complaint, all for the affection he bears his general and his cause.

So are you to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," "deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow him," and count, not merely your comforts, but your lives even, "not dear to you," if called upon to sacrifice them for his sake.

A manly soldier *never deserts*. He serves out the time for which he enlisted, come what will, life or death, victory or defeat. So, as manly

soldiers, you must not desert your leader, you must serve out the time for which you have enlisted, and that is for *eternity*.

A manly soldier is *courageous*. He will stand at his post on the defensive, or will march boldly up to the enemy's batteries at the word of command, and engage in the thickest of the fight, and not suffer a nerve to tremble. So you, my young friends, are to feel "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," and "having done all, to stand" up manfully for Jesus, in defense of his cause, his people, and his truth; or march forward manfully and fearlessly, at his bidding, and make a vigorous onset upon the strongholds of the kingdom of darkness.

Thus, my young friends, wherever you are, in whatever circumstances you may be placed, either as citizens of the world, or as soldiers of Jesus Christ, "*be strong, and show yourselves men.*"

CHAPTER XV.

THE VINEYARD AND LABORERS.

Go ye also into the vineyard.—MATT. 20: 7.

THE subject of this chapter is taken from one of the parables of our blessed Lord. He represents God as the proprietor of a large vineyard in need of cultivation. There is much work to be done in it, and he calls for laborers at different hours of the day, and at evening reckons with them, and pays them according to his good pleasure, doing injustice to no one. The scope of the parable is to illustrate the goodness and the sovereignty of God. The metaphor which our Saviour uses illustrates also the relation which mankind sustain to God as his subjects and workers for him. In this sense I shall make a free use of it as illustrative of the situation of Christians in the world as laborers for God.

The subject discussed in this chapter is one which should interest all, and especially young Christians. Permit me then to direct your attention to several particulars.

First, *the Vineyard*, or field to which you are

called. It is a very *large* field, every portion of which needs cultivating. It embraces Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, and thousands of islands of the sea.

It is a very *hard*, *stony*, and *difficult* field to cultivate. There are everywhere hard and stony hearts, and hard characters to deal with, and obstacles to overcome; more in the way, and more difficult to surmount, a great deal, than any rocks or stones that impede the plow of the husbandman. There are high mountains of pride, and wealth, and aristocracy; there are low valleys of poverty, humiliation, and wretchedness. There are "sloughs of despond," and sinks of vice and moral pollution, where are found the "offscouring of all things." It is overrun with a rank and spontaneous growth of sin, and error, and infidelity, and false religion, and superstition, and fanaticism, and deism, and atheism. Scattered over the whole field are moral plants of every name but those of grace. There is not a spot on the face of the earth where you will find plants of grace growing spontaneously; the soil is too poor, the natural heart is too hard and stony. Venomous reptiles abound; they are the old serpent and his progeny. They are those of whom the Psalmist speaks when he says, "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, adders' poison is under their lips," "their poison is the

poison of a serpent ; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear ;" and like those whom our Saviour addressed when he exclaimed ; "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers." They are the slanderers, the whisperers, the backbiters, the " words of whose mouth are smoother than butter, but war is in their heart ; whose words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords." There are wild beasts,—the wicked, who persecute and oppress the Lord's people, who do all in their power to crush and destroy the Church. The Psalmist speaks of them, where he laments for the vine brought out of Egypt and planted in Palestine. "The hedge," he says, is "broken down, and the boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it."

There is an enemy that sows tares among the wheat ; who corrupts the Church, and everything good, by intermixing with it all manner of evil. He is the same enemy who did the same thing in our Saviour's time,—the devil,—who still continues to pass "to and fro in the earth, and walk up and down in it," while "men sleep," and when they are awake, too, doing all the mischief in his power. All these considerations combine to render the field, in which God calls laborers to work, a very hard and difficult field. But this is the field, hard and difficult as it is, where, my young friends, your services are wanted, and where God directs you to go and labor.

Secondly : *The work to be done* in God's vineyard. It is, in the first place, to be surveyed, to see what part of it most needs attention, and where in it labor can be performed to the best advantage. If I were absent from home in mid-summer, and should write to a laborer, directing him to go and work in my garden, and should give him no more specific directions as to where I wished him to begin, or specifically what I wished him to do, I should not expect him to enter the enclosure and go to work at random ; neither should I expect him to spend all his time in taking care of the walks and borders, while all the choice fruits, plants, and vines in the garden were overrun and choked with weeds. I should be dissatisfied did he not look about him, and survey the ground, and then set himself to work where his labor was most needed, and where he could do the most good. In regard to minutiae, I should expect him to exercise his good sense.

So, my young friends, this is the first thing requisite of you, as you step into God's enclosure, to work in his vineyard in obedience to his call ; you are to look about you, survey your field of effort, cast your eyes abroad over the world, and see what needs to be done for the glory of God, and the good of your fellow-men ; and conscientiously inquire in what sphere, and in what employment, you can serve God best, and do

the most good. Hence, a prominent question which comes up for you, especially young men, to decide at the commencement of your service is, "What occupation, trade, or profession shall I choose for life?" It is not enough that you serve God, but it is essential that you serve him in the best way you can, and according to the best of your ability. You are bound to serve him in your daily employments, whether it be on the farm, in the shop, in the store, in the study or school, or in any of the professions. Now in what employment can you be the most useful? Perhaps you can serve him best in some humble, laborious employment. Perhaps you could serve him better in some situation where your mind would be more severely taxed with labor than the body. Hence, you ought to make it a serious question for *conscience* to decide, and not merely your carnal inclinations, "*How* and *where* can I be most useful in God's field?" If you spend your days and energies on the farm or in the shop, when you ought to spend them in the study and in the pulpit, you would be like the gardener who should devote the whole of his time to the gravel-walks, while he neglects to destroy the weeds, and omits the culture of the vine, the corn, and the fruit. And, on the other hand, there is many a

- man in the pulpit, and at the bar, who ought to have remained on the farm or in the shop. A care-

ful survey of the field, and your own capabilities, will enable you not only to decide in regard to your occupation for life, but it will show you from time to time, the particular duties you have to discharge and responsibilities you are to assume. You will have social and domestic duties devolving on you. It is probable you will at some future time be *heads of families*, and if so you will have a most important work to do in watching over the corporeal, intellectual, and spiritual interests of your households. If you are not heads of families, you will be important members of this or that family circle, where your influence will be extensively felt, and where you can and ought to be extremely useful in guiding the members of that domestic circle, both by precept and by example, in the paths of virtue and holiness.

You will be members of *civil society*, and will be called on to stand at your posts, as pillars to uphold the fabric of all our free institutions. In the town where you reside you will have much labor to perform and influence to exert as good neighbors and citizens. There will be loud and constant demands upon your time and your energies, and sometimes upon your property, to sustain the cause of education, good order, and the various interests that go to make a peaceful, intelligent, virtuous, prosperous community. Every •

town, in order to prosper, must have its men (and women, too) of enlarged views, liberal minds, energy of purpose, and sterling principle, to stand up as pillars to sustain the numerous social and public interests without which society would soon relapse into a state of barbarism. There is not one of you, my young friends, but will find important work to do as members of the community where you reside.

Political duties will also demand your attention. The politics of a nation are next in importance to its morals and religion ; indeed, they exert a powerful influence on both. When I say that "political duties will claim your attention," I do not mean that you will be called — at least by God — to mingle in party strife ; to promote the interests of this faction, and oppose the interests of that one, for ambitious or selfish purposes. Far from it. God calls you to no such work as that — a work altogether beneath you as Christians and as men. But he does call upon you to interest yourselves in the good of the nation, and to use your influence for the election of good rulers,— men who will not bow down to subserve the interests of any party or clique whatever ; men of principle ; men who have *consciences* ; men who fear to do wrong ; men who love justice and hate oppression ; men who will enact righteous laws, and stand up for the universal rights of man ; men

who will ask of God, rather than the party which supports them, "What wilt thou have me to do?" It is such men as these we want to rule over us, and to legislate for us, no matter by what name they are designated; and to use your influence to secure the election of such men, is as much your bounden duty as it is to pray. To this end it is the duty of those of you who are men, to go to the ballot-box, and in every dignified, Christian way — and in no other — labor to secure such State and national legislators as shall legislate on *gospel*, and not on *party* principles. It is only in this sense, my young friends, and for carrying out such principles, that God will call you to work in his vineyard as "politicians." Christian politics is the only kind of politics a Christian ought to meddle with.

But by far the most important work to be done in God's vineyard is to *sow the seeds of gospel truth*, and to *cultivate plants of holiness*. The greater part of this field is as yet a wilderness, bearing nothing but tares, and the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah. To subdue this wilderness, and bring it to bear fruit unto God, is the great work to which every Christian is called; in other words, to labor to advance the cause of true religion in the world and convert sinners to Christ. Everything else is to be made subordinate to this; and this is the ultimate object to

be kept steadily in view. To rescue the world from the power of Satan, and save sinners whom the adversary had seduced from their allegiance and made heirs of perdition, was the grand object of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the vineyard, when he came from heaven and laid down his life for it; and this he has ordained to be the great work of his disciples, and this is what he has reference to, more than any and every thing else, my young friends, as he sends you forth into the field. It is that you may labor to advance the cause of true piety, and, so far as lies in your power, to bring back this revolted world to God. Here you will find enough to do, and enough to tax to the utmost your best energies. It is a noble and a glorious work, and one in which an angel might wish to be engaged. The various specific duties which claim your attention, as means to subserve the great end, are numerous. You are to cultivate the religion of the heart, and see that grace has taken root there and is bringing forth fruit. You are to labor for the advancement of religion in the community; contribute liberally and cheerfully for the support of religion and religious institutions, both at home and abroad. You are to labor for a high standard of piety in the church, by frequent counsel, sympathy, and co-operation with your pastor and brethren in every good work. You are to meet with them for public and social

worship, and not "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." You are to labor and pray for a revival of religion; look up the impenitent, and converse with them, and urge them, with tears, to become reconciled to God. You are to unite with others in giving the gospel to those who have it not, and sending the heralds of the cross to proclaim glad tidings of salvation to those who are sitting in the region and shadow of death. By every means in your power, God wishes you to strive to cultivate and reclaim this barren wilderness—the whole of it—until it shall bud and blossom and bear fruit like the primitive Eden.

Having taken a survey of the field, and the work to be done in it, we will now consider,

Thirdly: *The kind of laborers God wants for the performance of his work.* He wants *willing* men,—men who enter the vineyard not by constraint, but cheerfully, and who esteem it a privilege rather than a task, to labor in so good a cause, and under so good a master.

He wants *obedient* men,—those who will implicitly obey him and conform to rules he has laid down for the laborers, go to whatever portion of the field he directs, do the work he tells them, and, in all respects, do as they are bid.

He wants *self-denying* men, who will sacrifice ease, and emolument, and houses, and lands, and



will forsake father, and mother, and children,—who will lay down their own lives rather than not perform the work given them to do.

He wants *resolute* men, who are determined to go forward and accomplish something, and will never quail before opposition or obstacles.

He wants *courageous* men, who are not afraid of reptiles, wild beasts, nor creeping things; who are not afraid to encounter the devil and all his followers, whether he comes in the form of the old serpent, crawling in his filth and slime, or as a roaring lion from his den, "going about seeking whom he may devour."

He wants *diligent* men, who will not spend half their time in idleness under the shade, eating the fruits of the vineyard, while others are at work; but those who will labor from morning till evening, cheerfully enduring the burden and heat of the day.

He wants *thorough-going* men, who, in making clearings in the wilderness, will not merely lop off the branches, but will "lay the ax at the root of the tree;" who, in laboring to reform men, will not be satisfied with producing an external reformation by lopping off a few prominent sins, but will go down deep into the heart; and in building God's temple, will not "daub with untempered mortar;" and when, as physicians, they attempt to "heal the hurt of the daughter of his people," they will not do it slightly.

He wants *persevering* men, who will not "put their hand to the plow and look back;" who will not cease or relax their work because they think they have done enough, or are a little weary, but will persevere with undiminished zeal and fidelity until their sun has completed his course' through the heavens, and the shadows of life's evening come over them.

He wants *faithful, trustworthy men* in every respect, who need no watching lest they betray or neglect the interests entrusted to them, and who need to give no bonded securities that they will do as they say.

Such is the character of the laborers whom God wants when he says, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." It is such, I trust, as every one of you, my young friends, will try to form, and such as every one of you *may* form, God helping you.

Fourthly: We will consider *the encouragement there is to enter this vineyard, and to labor in it.*

1. In the first place, you will be under a good husbandman, who will treat you with all kindness, provide amply for all your necessities while at work, and will often come by his Spirit, and speak a kind word to you in the midst of your toil; and when you come to any difficulties, and find your foes too powerful for you, or your work too hard to be accomplished by your own unaided strength (as you will often find to be the case), then he will

defend you, yes, will himself kindly take hold and help you. "Fear thou not," he says; "for I am with thee;" "be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Though in yourselves you are weak, yet in him you are strong, and can do all things. He will thus cheer you, sympathize with you, provide for you, defend and aid you while at work. He will also pay you most liberally at the close of the day, infinitely more than you have earned or deserve. And he is a good paymaster and will do as he says.

Another encouragement is, the work you are called to perform, though hard and difficult, is nevertheless *infinitely important and interesting*. All other employments, compared with labors with and for God in his vineyard, for the advancement of his kingdom, the salvation of souls, and the conversion of the world, are trifling and without interest. What more noble, dignified, heart-stirring, heavenly labor can we possibly engage in than to be "co-workers together with God" in doing good, especially the unspeakable good of saving our fellow-beings from a miserable eternity, and preparing them for the infinite joys of heaven? Who would not spend and be spent in such a service, and for such an object, without thinking of either the sacrifice or the reward? This was the great

work of our Saviour, and it is a work worthy of a God.

Another encouragement for entering the Lord's vineyard and laboring in it, is *certainty of success*. It is a great damper to our zeal, when we undertake, or think of undertaking, any enterprise, to feel that, do the best we can, it is very uncertain whether we shall accomplish anything. But in our labors for God, in his cause, there is no such uncertainty. The holiness and the veracity of Jehovah are pledged to give success to the faithful servant. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Labor spent in God's vineyard can never be lost. If his servants break up the fallow ground, sow the seed, and bestow all necessary culture, he will not withhold the fertilizing dews of his grace, nor the quickening rains of the Holy Spirit, but will bestow both in large measure, so that every seed sown shall take root, and spring up, and bear fruit, some *thirty*, some *sixty*, and some an *hundred* fold.

I conclude with a single word in relation to the *final results* of thus spending the day of life in diligent, faithful labors in God's vineyard. At its close, the laborers will all be assembled to receive their reward, and every man will receive according as he hath done. To each one who has "patiently

continued in well-doing, the Lord of the vineyard will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And for them shall be prepared scepters, crowns, and thrones. Then shall they who have turned many to righteousness shine as stars in the firmament forever and ever.

May this reward be yours, my young friends, and it certainly will, if you remain true to the last, doing your duty *faithfully*, bearing cheerfully and manfully "the burden and heat of the day."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN AT THE CLOSE OF LIFE.

Neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy.—ACTS 20 : 24.

I HAVE been addressing you, my youthful friends, in the preceding chapters, on the relations, duties, and responsibilities of life. I wish, in this chapter, to direct your attention to the period when life shall close. I do not know whether the announcement of my subject strikes you pleasantly or painfully. Young people generally do not take much satisfaction in thinking of leaving the world, unless they are Christians ; and not even then, unless they are in a spiritual frame of mind. I hope, however, that you are not strangers to this subject, — that you have so often meditated on it, and have made so thorough a preparation for leaving the world, that the thought of it does not give you pain or dread. This subject is as truly a practical one for any one of you, as it is for those of threescore years and ten ; for you must die as well as they, and it may be quite as soon, and even sooner. But should you live to their

age, that period will very soon be here. You are running a race, and whether it be longer or shorter, you will soon come to the goal. Life will pass away with a rapidity of which you can form no adequate conception. Your days are but a span, "an inch or two of time." They fly like a message upon the wires of the telegraph, and finish their course in an infinitely shorter space of time, comparing the period of human life with eternity. You are now looking to the future with much interest. The world lies before you. You are full of hope, and perhaps of enthusiasm, and often anticipate where you shall be, and what you shall do, when you shall have entered fully upon the active stage of life. You hope for prosperity and happiness. I sympathize with you, and sincerely wish for you the same. But it is important that you look forward, not only to life in its progress, but to life at its close. How will life terminate? How do you expect to finish your course? When you come to lie down upon the bed of death, do you expect to be filled with joy and peace? It is desirable that this should be the case. Paul regarded the happy termination of life as more important than any worldly good. "I count not my life dear unto myself," says he, "so that I might finish my course with joy." It will be of but very little consequence what sufferings, trials, and privations you meet with here, provided you finish your course with

joy. And unless you do thus finish it, all worldly prosperity will do you much more harm than good.

There is a great difference in the closing scenes and feelings of persons who may be said to finish their course with joy, — those, too, whom we have reason to believe are sincere Christians. Some depart in triumph. Their souls are filled with ecstasy; and, before quitting the body, seem to soar, as on angels' wings, to the third heaven. Their countenances are lighted up by a celestial radiance, like that of Stephen when committing his departing spirit to his glorified Redeemer. Like him, they have a mental vision of Christ upon his throne of mercy, and, while lingering upon the bed of death, commence the song which they will sing, with transporting delight, to all eternity. The chamber of death is transformed into the vestibule of heaven. Such was the dying scene of Janeway, Finley, Payson, Evarts, and many more that might be mentioned. *Their* course was finished, not with *joy* merely, but with *rapture*.

Another class of Christians finish their course in a calm, loving trust in Christ; with no ecstasies, no visions; but with a faith as unshaken as the everlasting hills, and with a "peace which passeth all understanding." They are not oppressed with doubts and apprehensions in regard to their good estate; but, with a heavenly composure, gently lean on Jesus' bosom, and "breathe their lives out

- sweetly there." They are glad to leave the world, that they may go home to dwell in their Father's house in heaven. Their hope of salvation is based solely on the merits of Jesus Christ, and not on anything good in themselves, for they feel altogether unworthy of any favor. But, believing in Christ, they are tranquil and happy.

Now, both of these classes of Christians "finish their course with joy." The former is a highly privileged class, which embraces a small number, comparatively, of those who, we have reason to believe, are Christ's real disciples. But the absence of those raptures is no evidence of a want of piety. Those transports are to be regarded as the special gift of God, which he dispenses according to the counsel of his own will; and by some Christians, however much grace they may possess, these raptures may not be attainable.

But the calm, peaceful, holy joy of the latter class is the privilege of us all, and one which we ought to look forward to, and make preparation for.

Let us, therefore, dwell a little more at length upon such a close of a consistent, heavenly-minded, Christian pilgrim's life.

He "finishes his course with joy." We will consider for a few moments the source of that joy, and the ingredients of which it is composed.

The faithful Christian, when finishing his course,

rejoices that he has reached the end of his journey. Life has been to him a checkered scene. It has had its sunlight and clouds, its joys and its sorrows, its pleasures and its pains. He has enjoyed much, and he has suffered much. He has seen some good, and a great deal of evil. It has been, upon the whole, a weary and a toilsome pilgrimage, and he is glad that it is over. He would not go back and make it again, if the whole world were held out to him as a temptation. The troubles, the anxieties, the pains, the sickness, and the afflictions which were his companions most of the way, he now takes leave of forever, and it is to him a source of great satisfaction. As he now looks back upon the world, gradually fading from his view, he is astonished at himself, when he reflects how it once engrossed his affections, and how reluctant he was to part with it.

He rejoices in *the grace of God, which led him to repent of his sins and consecrate himself to Christ.* The time was, when he was a thoughtless, impenitent sinner, "without God, and without hope in the world," going on without concern in the broad road down to the chambers of eternal death. But God in mercy arrested him in his career of sin, and led him by his Holy Spirit to the Saviour, to whom he consecrated himself for time and eternity. What joy it affords him now, as he is dying, that he was not let alone in his sins to perish, but

was constrained by God's grace to forsake his course of iniquity, and the unsatisfying pleasures of earth, for an interest in the Saviour. If this was done in early life, this consideration enhances his joy, and he wishes it had been earlier still.

He rejoices that by God's *help he has not lived altogether in vain*. He has been enabled to do some good to his fellow-men, and something for the cause of Christ. His endeavor has been to follow the Saviour, through evil as well as through good report, and every effort made during his life for the advancement of religion and the salvation of souls is reviewed with a holy pleasure. Not that he takes any credit for what he has done, or congratulates himself upon his own righteousness, for he feels that after all he has been an "unprofitable servant," and that in himself there has been no good thing; but he adores that grace which first called him into the vineyard, and kept him in it, and crowned with success his imperfect efforts to be useful. To God's grace he ascribes all the good he has done; still he rejoices to think that God condescended to use him as an unworthy instrument in accomplishing his designs of love and mercy to a lost world. How differently does he feel on the review of a faithful, holy, devoted life, — a life of prayer, of self-denial, of consistent, exemplary piety, — from what he would of a life of lukewarmness or coldness, of spiritual indolence,

of conformity to the world, and of self-indulgence ; and himself scarcely saved ; yet "so as by fire !" The grand aim of his life has been to honor Christ and save souls, and he has the satisfaction to know that his labors have not been in vain. God has kindly owned and blessed them.

Again, he rejoices that he is about to be freed from sin. The greatest burden of his life has been sin ! It has caused him more trouble, more anxiety, more pain, more grief, than all things else. He has seen sin, and its evil effects, all around him. Sin among the ungodly, — open, outrageous, blasphemous sin, pouring contempt upon the Saviour and his cross ! He has seen sin among his brethren, often bringing religion into contempt ; but, most of all, sin in his own heart and life ! From the day of his espousals to Christ till now, he has been obliged to maintain a constant warfare between the "flesh and the spirit," the "old man and the new." When he would do good, evil has been present with him. A law in his members has ever been warring against the law of his mind, often bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death ; so that he has frequently been led to exclaim : "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?"

This struggle is now almost over. The battle has been fought, and most vigorously contested

on both sides ; but the victory is his. The enemy has been vanquished, not by his prowess and might, but by the strength derived from the Captain of his salvation, and he will never be harassed by him more. Well may the Christian rejoice in the prospect of deliverance from an evil which has been the bane of his life, and which has caused the bitterest tears he ever shed. He has not only done with sin himself, but he is to be removed from its influence and its annoyance. He has all his life associated, to a certain extent, with sinners ; he is to do so no more. He has been constantly assailed and harassed by temptations, but this trial is over.

“ Sin, his worst enemy before,
 Shall vex his eyes and ears no more ;
 His inward foes will all be slain,
 Nor Satan break his peace again.”

He rejoices in *the presence and strengthening grace of Christ*. The Saviour has never been so precious to him as now. His promise that he would never leave nor forsake his people he finds amply verified in his happy experience. His presence dissipates the gloom of the chamber of death, and lights up the dark valley through which he is passing. The Saviour gives strength and patience to endure the pains inflicted by the sting of the fell destroyer, and imparts a holy tranquillity to the soul. The dying believer rests calmly and

securely upon that sure foundation-stone on which his hopes were builded years ago ; and he finds that no floods or tempests can shake it. Christ is everything, and even more than he had ever conceived him to be ; he is all in all ; he is a friend exactly adapted to his present wants, and "sticketh closer than a brother." His voice is heard amid the agitations and tumults of dissolving nature, which would otherwise distract and overwhelm the soul, saying, "Peace, be still ; fear not, thou worm of Jacob, for I am with thee ; I will be thy light, thy support, thy comfort, and thy defence." "Yes," responds the believer ; "into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "Oh, how precious is Christ !"

"His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than music his voice ;
His presence disperses my gloom,
And bids all within me rejoice."

Although, as I have already remarked, there is a great difference in the experiences of truly good men when they come to die, some being much more transported with joy than others ; yet it is generally true of all who have been in a good measure faithful and true to their professions, that Christ is extremely precious to them, and

puts beneath them his everlasting arms, and keeps them from sinking in the deep waters.

Again, the faithful Christian, in finishing his course, rejoices *in view of his promised rest*. He feels that he is on the confines of heaven. The world with its scenes—ever fitful and changing—is gradually receding from his view, till finally it disappears. He sees it depart without regret. He has had enough of it. It has been a deceitful, unsatisfying world. It has always disappointed his expectations, and often betrayed him into sin. He turns his eyes from it, without one tear of sorrow at parting, to the better land, and rejoices in hope. He knows that Christ has prepared for him a mansion in his Father's house, and to this he knows he will shortly be admitted with a cordial welcome. There will be found all that can delight and bless the soul. The vail is in a measure drawn aside, and he is permitted to have some glimpses of the New Jerusalem, the city of God, adorned with everything beautiful, as a bride is adorned for her husband. That city is to be his home forever, and there is only a step between him and it. There he will rest from his toils, be freed from his troubles, purified from his sins, and be forever blessed with his Lord.

May it be your happy lot, my young friends, thus to finish your course; and that you may, let me urge you to be faithful in running the Christian

race. Do your duty every day with so much fidelity, that the retrospect of life shall afford you comfort when you are reclining on the bed of death. Cultivate such familiar intercourse with Christ now, and through the rest of your pilgrimage, that you can with the utmost confidence rely upon him to sustain and comfort you in the trying hour. You will need him then; you cannot do without him then. You will find it a serious thing to die; and yet it will be most delightful to die, if you can feel that Jesus is with you in that hour.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHRISTIAN IN HEAVEN.

. . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. — 1 COR. 2:9.

IN the last chapter we considered the Christian at the close of life; in the present chapter, and the following, we will consider the *Christian in heaven*.

We will suppose that he has lived a consistent, holy life, faithfully discharging his duty to God and man; that he has been a good soldier, has fought a good fight, kept the faith, and "finished his course with joy." He has peacefully closed his eyes in death and bid the world farewell. It is now a most interesting inquiry, Where does the spirit go? and what is its condition?

The light of nature alone gives only vague answers to these questions. It is to be presumed that the soul survives the body, and that it is in a state of conscious enjoyment; but where, and with whom, we should be left to conjecture. There is a darkness overshadowing the grave which the unassisted eye of reason could

never penetrate. But the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to our aid. It partially raises the curtain, and, although it does not give us a full view, it affords us some most interesting but indistinct visions of what lies beyond it. Life and immortality are here brought to light by Jesus Christ and confirmed by his own resurrection and ascension. A perfect knowledge of the state of the soul of the believer, as it leaves the body, and of its condition in the future world, can never be had till we learn from experience. As the apostle says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." He does not mean by this that we can have no idea of the condition and enjoyments of the righteous after death, for he immediately adds, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" *i. e.*, to a certain extent. There is just enough revealed to dispel our doubts, and to cheer and animate our hopes, and to stimulate us to a diligent preparation for that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

Let us, then, for a few moments, turn our attention to the believer, who, by the grace of God, has run with patience and diligence the race set before him, and has finished his course with joy. He dies. The world fades from his sight; he hears the last words of kindness from weeping

friends, exchanges with them the last pressure of the hand, receives the parting kiss, the eyes grow dim, the breath grows shorter and shorter, the pulse quicker and fainter, till at last the lips and the eyes are fixed, the heart ceases to beat, and the earthly scene is closed ! But the spirit—where is that? and whither does it go? Does it go into a state of insensibility? or is it still in a state of conscious existence? Does it remain here on the earth, or does it pass into another world? We are left in no doubtful state of uncertainty here. Our Saviour said that the soul of Lazarus was “carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” He told the thief on the cross, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” He spoke also of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as being then alive in another world. Moses and Elias appeared to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration.

We hence learn that the soul of the believer at death is immediately conveyed to heaven. It is not at all irrational or improbable, that “ministering spirits” are commissioned to be its convoy to that unseen and unknown world. Our Lord countenances this idea when he speaks of the angels conducting Lazarus to the embraces of Abraham. So may angels be ever hovering around the couch of the dying Christian, waiting to congratulate him on the moment of his release from his prison of clay, to bear him on their wings to the abodes

of the blessed. But it is not possible for us to know certainly how the disembodied spirit finds its way to the better land, or how it is conveyed thither. It is enough for us to know that God will provide a short, a safe, and an easy transit for the disencumbered spirit from earth to heaven.

Let us carry our thoughts a little farther onward, and consider the Christian's final home, and the sources of his happiness after he arrives there.

The Christian's home is heaven, the paradise spoken of by our Saviour, the New Jerusalem revealed in vision to the Apostle John.

It is a most interesting inquiry, What and where is heaven? To these questions we can give only approximate answers. We can say, however, with a great deal of confidence, that heaven *is a place*, and has a definite location somewhere in the vast creation of God. It is everywhere thus spoken of in the Scriptures. We have as much evidence that heaven is a place, with its own peculiar scenery, and its own position in space, as we have that Eden had, or that London has at the present time. Christ spoke of having come *from* heaven and of going *to* heaven. The prayer which he gave as a model for all his disciples, represents heaven as being the peculiar dwelling-place of God. He spoke of going home to his Father's house, and that he would "prepare a place" for his followers. Christ had a mate-

rial body after his resurrection, with which he ascended. Enoch and Elijah each had bodies in which they were translated. These bodies still exist. Where are they? They are not in this world, we know. There must be, from the very nature of things, a place or a position in space for them to occupy. And so of the bodies of the saints who rose with Christ after his crucifixion, and of those who shall rise at the last day. These bodies all are substance, capable of locomotion, of going from place to place, and they must be somewhere, and cannot be omnipresent. They must have a place in which to exist and to exert their functions as truly as our own must have on earth. In my opinion, those persons are mistaken, and know not whereof they affirm, who assert that heaven is not a place, and has no definite locality, but is only a state or condition of the mind. There is a vagueness and an indefiniteness in all such representations of heaven, entirely unlike anything we find in the Bible, and which fall altogether below the grandeur, dignity, and beauty of the subject. By speaking of heaven as being anywhere and everywhere, they do, in fact, make it *nowhere*, and divest it of a large portion of its attractions.

1. It is most rational to suppose that heaven is a *material world*, as truly so as the planet on which we live, and that it has its definite location, and

its fixed physical laws, as much as the sun has, or any of the stars. There is a reluctance in some minds to admit that matter or materiality can have anything to do with heaven, or can be adapted to the wants, or conducive to the happiness of spiritual being. Matter, they say, is gross and degrading.

But this is not only an unwarranted assertion, but it is a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of God. What is matter? and whence came it? It is the handiwork of God. There is as much that is incomprehensible in it as there is in spirit, and it as clearly demonstrates the power and wisdom of its author. Matter is a medium through which God has ever delighted to manifest himself. Look at the sun and moon and the countless myriads of stars that bedeck the heavens; what are they? They are all matter. This we know, just as certainly as we know that this world is matter, and that our bodies are matter. This is fully proved to a demonstration. Some, at least, of the physical laws which govern our world, govern the worlds above us. They have their motions in space, their solidity, their cohesive attraction, their gravitation, and their revolutions upon their axes and in their orbits. The whole created universe (mind excepted) is made up of matter; and it is all God's work, and is worthy of the hand that made it out of nothing, and it manifests

his glory. God takes delight in these worlds or he would not have made them what they are.

God interests himself in matter, not only on this stupendous scale, in the structure of worlds, suns, and systems, but in forms and objects most minute. Look at the animal creation, from the elephant and mastodon to the smallest creeping thing; from the ostrich of the wilderness to the minutest insect that sports in the sunbeam; from the leviathan of the deep to the microscopic animalcule that floats in a drop of water; they are all creatures of God, and they are formed of *matter*. Look at the vegetable world, from the cedar of Lebanon to a blade of grass, or the moss that grows upon the rocks; what a wonderful variety of forms; what beauty of colors; what delicacy of structure! Consider the lilies of the field, more gorgeously attired than was "Solomon in all his glory." Look at the exquisite taste and artistic skill displayed in the pencilling of the rose, the blue-bell, the violet, and the ten thousand flowers that adorn the field or *partêrre*. God is the artist who created and painted them all. And yet they are all *matter*. Shall God have so much to do with matter, shall the material heavens declare his glory, shall he please himself by moulding matter into such a numberless variety of forms and painting it with such inimitable beauty and delicacy of hue, and shall we call matter gross

and degrading, and say that a material world is not fit for his dwelling-place, and that of spiritual, holy beings? When God created material things he pronounced them all "*good*," and not only so, but "*very good*," and it is a reflection on him to speak disparagingly of them. We know that in God's estimation a material world *is* a fit residence for holy beings, and that spirit is *not* degraded by being intimately associated with matter. God created man in his own image, a holy being, and placed him in a material world — a material paradise — as a place suitable for his holy nature and his holy character. For man's spirit (whose essence will be the same in heaven that it was on earth) God prepared a material body, as an appropriate residence for it. If it was so once, why may it not be again? No one can show why it may not. I suppose one reason, and the principal one, why persons have been so unwilling to admit the existence of a material heaven is, they associate matter with sin; whereas matter has no more to do with sin, necessarily, than holiness has. God cursed this world for man's sake; that is, he cursed the productions of it, or caused it to produce what would be a curse; but God did not curse the materials of which the world is made — much less did he curse matter itself.

It is therefore probable to my mind that heaven

is not only a place, definitely located, but that it is a material world, bearing an analogy, or resemblance, to all the other worlds which God has made. All Scripture representations of heaven are as if it were material. It was undoubtedly the first world of his creation, and was then a type, so to speak, of all that were to follow.

2. *Where* is heaven? If it be a place, as the Scriptures represent, and a material world, as analogy, and reason, and the manner in which it is spoken of in the Bible seem to indicate, what is its position? where is it situated? To this question we can give only a probable answer. The Bible speaks of God and heaven as being "above" us. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men." David looked "up" to the everlasting hills. Elijah went "up" to heaven. The Saviour "came down from heaven," and he "ascended up to heaven," when, after his resurrection, he parted from his disciples. The apostle tells us that the Lord, when he comes to judgment, shall "descend from heaven with a shout," and that those who are alive shall be "caught up." These expressions do not, however, give us any definite information on the subject. "Down," and "up," we all know, are relative terms. They relate only to this world. "Down" means toward the center of the earth, wherever we stand upon it, and "up" means away from that center, in any

direction. Hence, the earth being spherical, up in one place would be in exactly the opposite direction to what it would be in another. It would be impossible to leave this world, go which way we will, without going up. In the absence of positive information, the most probable supposition is, that heaven, the throne of God, is in *the center of all his works*,—a vast globe, of almost unlimited dimensions, which constitutes the center of physical attraction of all material worlds in the universe.* The science of astronomy reveals to us certain interesting facts, which serve to afford, if not proof, at least plausibility, and even *probability*, to this theory. The universal law which God has established for the heavenly bodies, so far as we can ascertain, is, that they all revolve in circular or elliptical orbits around a center toward which they gravitate. In our solar system small bodies revolve around larger ones, and these in their turn revolve around larger ones still. We see moons revolving around the planets, and the planets, with moons in their train, revolving around the sun, and the sun we know to be in motion, carrying with him his larger family of planets, satellites, and comets. Now where is the sun going with his numerous retinue? Is he wandering off at random through the heavens, without

* See Dick's *Philosophy of a Future State*; an interesting treatise.

any order, and without any law to direct or regulate his movements? This would not be in analogy with nature. It would be irrational to suppose that God would bestow so much attention upon the component parts of the system, carefully adjusting with infinite skill and wisdom each member in its orbit, and giving laws, which operate with undeviating precision, to guide and regulate this complicated machinery, and then send the entire system itself wandering through space without order and without law. We cannot suppose he would bestow so much pains upon the less, and none upon the greater, in which the less are involved.

If, then, the sun, with more than fifty worlds in his train, including comets, is not wandering at random through space, to what law or laws is he subject? No doubt to the great fundamental law of gravitation, combined with a projectile force; in other words, he is performing a magnificent, sublime revolution around a grand center of attraction, in the same manner that the planets, with their minuter systems, revolve around himself. And the sun is not alone, but is one of many millions performing harmoniously the same circuit; for accurate observation has demonstrated that the fixed stars, as they are called, are not really fixed, but are in motion. It is supposed by astronomers that our sun is only a single member

of the galaxy, or milky way, and that all are moving together in the same general direction. Now what can be more philosophical, or more plausible, than that there is, in the center of the universe, a vast globe of inconceivable dimensions, which, by the power of God, exerted through the law of gravitation, controls the movements of these innumerable heavenly bodies, and keeps each system in its place, as in concert they perform their long cycles of myriads of ages. Not only does this seem rational and probable, but do not the discovered laws of physics, which are none other than laws of God, seem to demand that such must be the case?

Now if this be so, what fitter place for heaven, and for the throne of Him

. . . . "Who rolls the spheres,
And storm, and fire, and hail prepares,
And guides this vast machine;
Whose piercing eye at once surveys,
Where thousand suns and systems blaze"

—of Him who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth," who "stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in?"

What fitter place for angels, and for all the redeemed, to dwell in, situated here in the very center of God's glorious works as they revolve around,

"Forever singing as they shine,
'The hand that made us is divine;'"

ready, as his swift messengers, to fly at any moment to the nearest or most distant star, to execute the divine behests, in performing errands of love and mercy?

3. The *magnitude* of heaven.

There are two considerations which lead to the conclusion that the size and extent of that world must be vast beyond all conception.

First, if it be the physical center of matter, and holds the unnumbered millions of suns and systems in their places by the power of gravitation, how almost infinite its dimensions must be! The sun, which is only a minute speck in God's firmament, in order to control and regulate the planets which revolve around him, must be 1,400,000 times larger than the world we inhabit. If such be the size of the sun, what must be the physical magnitude of a sphere which would control, not only the sun with his train, but millions upon millions of others like it, with their attendant systems?

Secondly, heaven must be of vast magnitude when we consider the countless *multitude of its inhabitants*. It must be sufficient to accommodate the holy angels, who are called "God's host," or great multitude, and who the apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, says are an "innumerable company." And to these must be added all the redeemed from among men, from Adam to the last of his race, and all who have been, or may be,

translated thither from other worlds. The apostle John saw there a "multitude which no man can number, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."

4. The *appearance* of heaven, as seen by its blessed inhabitants. Mortal eye hath not seen it, nor the heart conceived of it to any considerable extent; but from the limited description given of it by the pen of inspiration, we are assured that it must be surpassingly magnificent and beautiful. All the enchanting landscapes, combining hill and dale, mountains, plains, valleys, flowery meads, emerald lawns, crystal lakes, roaring cataracts, musical cascades, murmuring rivulets, sparkling fountains, beautiful gardens, pleasure-grounds, walks, arbors, shade-trees, splendid domes, arches, temples, towers, palaces, and everything else that men call beautiful in this world, are nothing in comparison with the scenery of heaven; they are perfectly tame and uninteresting, when contemplated by the side of the heavenly Canaan and the New Jerusalem, as revealed to St. John in the isle of Patmos. The apostle says: "The angel carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." He then goes on to

describe its pearly gates, and its walls and foundation stones of gems. But these are only the exterior of the city. The scenery within was too magnificent and beautiful to be described. He saw "streets of gold;" a "sea of glass like unto crystal;" the river of the water of life; the tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruits; and there he saw the Throne of God and the Lamb, which he does not attempt to describe. The description which John gives of what he saw in heaven, can give us only a proximate idea of its glories, and probably he himself had only a dim foreshadowing of the reality. Reason, as well as revelation, teaches us that the God who made the flowers is infinite in taste and skill; and if he made so many and such exquisitely beautiful things to adorn this little speck of earth,—the abode of poor, degraded, fallen man,—what must he have done to beautify and render delightful his own blessed abode, and the world where he has, if I may so speak, exhausted all his skill in fitting it up for the delightful residence of his own beloved children? "I go," said our Saviour, "to prepare a place for you." Note the expression — "*I go to prepare a place for you.*" What a beautiful place, and what a beautiful world must that be, which the kind, benevolent, loving Jesus, in his almighty power, and with his infinite resources, has prepared and is preparing for all his dear disciples,

whose names he has engraven upon his heart ! This, my friends, is the place prepared for you if you are Christ's sincere disciples.

I have occupied your attention in this chapter in speaking of the philosophy of heaven. I have dwelt chiefly on its physical properties, not by any means because they are the most important, but because they have an importance which is frequently overlooked and undervalued. Heaven is too often described by negatives. It is not a place, it is said ; it has no locality ; it is not matter ; nothing is seen there ; nothing is heard there. Thus this negative description is continued, till heaven is stripped of everything attractive to most minds, and is left a mere blank. It is like divesting a man of his hearing, his seeing, his feeling, his tasting, and smelling, and leaving him nothing but thought. Now I do not deny but such a man might, to a certain extent, be happy — happier, indeed, by far, than if his senses were all spared and the power of thought taken away. But he needs the whole to perfect his happiness. And so does heaven need its physical, external properties to render it perfect, and they are much dwelt upon in the sacred Scriptures, and they are spoken of, not as myths, but realities.

But I have only entered upon my subject. I have not yet spoken of those things which constitute the chief attractions of heaven, and which go

to make up the principal blessedness of the soul of the departed and glorified Christian. This most important part of the subject we will consider in the next chapter.

I shall close this chapter by suggesting to my young friends, and to all of you, my readers, the importance of often making heaven a subject of your contemplations. You will find it to conduce much to your spirituality and happiness. It is to be your home, your eternal home, if you are the true children of God ; and that very soon.

Christians do not think of heaven enough. It is crowded out of the mind by the pressure of other things. The consequence is, they lose, in a measure, their interest in it and make but little effort to secure it. Heaven is not to them an object of longing desire, but merely a city of refuge from threatened evil. They know that they must die, and they would much rather go to heaven than to hell ; but they would rather stay in this world than do either, especially if they could have its riches and emoluments, and could put off old age. Let your minds be much on heaven, my friends. It is a most fruitful and delightful theme. There is nothing like it. Dwell on it until desire shall be enkindled in your bosoms to go and take possession of it — a desire that shall completely swallow up all others. Keep heaven in your mental eye, and it will keep expanding larger and larger, until

you can see nothing else but heaven, and the King who reigns in it, and the inhabitants who dwell there. This poor, worthless world, which assumes such an importance in the estimation of most persons, will dwindle to its own insignificance, and your spirits will pant to be freed from the shackles of earth, that they may soar away to that bright and better land, to drink at the fount of perfect bliss, and be forever with the Lord.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.—Ps. 17 : 15.

IN the last chapter we considered heaven, to which the Christian is conveyed from his dying couch, in its physical aspects ; a world of exquisite beauty and loveliness, and fitted up with everything that can contribute to the refined taste and happiness of its blessed inhabitants. But the chief blessedness of the Christian, when he arrives in heaven, will by no means consist in beholding its external beauties. There are emotions and exercises of the mind of a *moral* nature, which, as sources of happiness, infinitely surpass anything material in that glorious home of the righteous. We can imagine, without fear of mistake, or the charge of going into the region of speculation, what some of the ingredients in the Christian's cup of happiness must be when he arrives at heaven.

1. In the *first* place, he must be happy in the conscious knowledge that he is *saved*. What fearful peril has he been in ! To what an awful doom has he been exposed ! Nothing less than ever-

lasting wretchedness and despair. Once he was suspended over the gulf of perdition, as it were by a single thread, and that was liable every moment to be severed. But from that doom he is *saved*. He is *sure* of it now. There had always been some uncertainty about it before, although he had a hope which was a source of great comfort to him. Now, his feet stand on Mount Zion, and faith and hope are exchanged for a reality.

The shipwrecked mariner, who all night has been dashed about among the breakers, clinging to a plank, in danger of being engulfed every moment, as multitudes of his companions all around him have been, is at length, by a providential wave, rolled upon the shore. As he plants his feet upon the land, and the waters retire, what joy fills his heart as he contemplates his late peril, and now feels that it is all passed, and that he is saved. How much is implied in that one word, *saved*. What then must be the joy of the saint, who awakes in heaven to the consciousness that he is saved from hell !

2. *Secondly*, he is happy in his *new mode of existence*. He is no longer restrained in his movements by a cumbersome body of flesh and blood. He has entered upon a spiritual existence, which, although incomprehensible by us while we tabernacle in the body, we have reason to believe bears some analogy to the life of the

beautiful, golden-winged insect, rejoicing in the sunshine, and making its home in the bosoms of the flowers, contrasted with that of the disgusting worm from which it sprang, crawling upon the earth.

3. *Thirdly*, he is *freed from all evil*, natural and moral. He is relieved forever from all bodily *pain* and *sickness*. What a relief is this to one who has spent days, and weeks, and months, and *years* in some instances, in severe bodily anguish, inquiring at night, "When will it be morning?" and in the morning, "When will it be evening?" tossing to and fro, and finding no rest. There is no pain in heaven. The inhabitants shall not say there, "I am sick." There are no losses of property, no disappointments, no anxious cares or solitudes. His treasure is where "neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

There are no *afflictions* there to rend his heart and cause his bosom to heave with anguish. His sorrows are all passed, and the last tear has been shed. No more mournful adieus, no more distressing partings; loved ones will never again be torn from his embrace. He will never suffer again from the ill-conduct or ill-treatment of others. He will experience no more ungrateful requitals for kindnesses shown; he will be beyond the reach of slander, envy, or hatred. He was

subject to all of these evils, more or less, while an inhabitant of earth ; but in heaven they are, and forever will be, unknown.

But the greatest evil that ever troubled him was *sin*—*sin in his own heart and life*. When he would do good, evil was ever present with him. His transgressions multiplied, so that it seemed, sometimes, as if they must certainly prove his destruction. His love often grew cold, his obedience was always imperfect, and even his prayers were mingled with sin. Oh, how hard was the struggle between the flesh and the spirit ! how violent the conflict for the ascendancy between the old man and the new ! Often did the adversary, and the remaining corruptions of his own heart, triumph for a season over the principle of grace, and bring him into captivity to the law of sin and death. But the conflict is over now. The adversary will never harass him more. The old Adam is completely slain ; his corruptions are all left behind, and now his regeneration is complete, and he is entirely transformed into the image of Christ. To be freed from sin, was one of his most ardent, longing desires while making his earthly pilgrimage, and now that desire of his heart is fully gratified. He is washed from every defilement, and his garments are made perfectly white in the blood of the Lamb.

4. *Fourthly*, the believer, when he reaches

heaven, finds himself *surrounded by an innumerable multitude of holy beings*, who joyfully welcome him to their fellowship, and to a participation of their bliss. As he looks around upon the happy throng, his heart is rejoiced to see many a dear friend with whom he held delightful intercourse on earth. Here, is, perhaps,—and surely will be, in many cases,—a sainted father or mother, or both, who by prayer and baptism, consecrated him in infancy to God, and who by precept and example, as he grew in years, strove to guide his too wayward feet in the paths of wisdom and holiness; who watched over and counselled him while they lived, and left him a parental blessing at their death. There, perhaps, he greets beloved brothers and sisters, to whom he was most tenderly attached on earth, who went before him into heaven, and left him mourning their departure.

There, too, will the parent recognize a sweet babe, snatched from earth like a bud broken from its stem; or, it may be, a lovely youth, cut down like a rose, just as it was opening its petals to bestow its fragrance upon those who had tenderly watched over and nurtured it. But among all the recognitions of earthly friends in the heavenly state, none will be more interesting than that of loved *companions*. The husband will again see the wife of his bosom, whom death tore from his

embrace, and the wife will again rejoice in the presence of him on whom she once leaned as her support, affectionate counsellor, and guide, although the marriage relation will not be resumed. Pastors will recognize the pious members of their flocks ; and those who were members of Christ's church, and his real disciples, will distinguish from all others, the faithful shepherd who fed them with the bread of life and led them to the fountain of living waters. Christian neighbors and friends, who on earth took sweet counsel together, and who "went to the house of God in company," and delighted in each other's society and friendship, will exchange mutual greetings again on the heavenly hills, and resume their long-interrupted intercourse. That friends will thus know and recognize each other in heaven, I have no doubt. Besides these familiar friends, who were once so precious to him on earth, the soul of the believer will see in heaven the "saints of all ages," from every kindred, tongue, and people, the apostles, prophets, and patriarchs of olden time, and the noble company of martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy, and who sealed their testimony with their blood. And in addition to these, he will see an innumerable company of pure, holy intelligences that never sinned, — angels who dwell in God's presence, and are

embassadors to do his will, and to carry messages of love to all parts of his intelligent creation.

This is the kind of society to which we shall be introduced on our arrival in heaven. I say *we*, for I am fondly anticipating we shall all be there. What a source of happiness it must be to be surrounded by such friends, to hold intercourse with them, to love them, and be beloved by them all. How pleasant to hold communion again with those dear ones we loved on earth. How precious those greetings, and how delightful to roam with them the green fields of the heavenly Canaan, or sit with them beneath the bowers of Paradise, and talk of the love of Jesus, of the grace that saved our souls from eternal perdition, and of the way in which God led our wandering feet from the broad road into the straight and narrow path of life. And then we will recall the various methods his love constrained him to use to keep us in it. Sometimes he led us by mercies, and sometimes he drove us by the rod. But all was kindness, and designed to bring us safe to heaven. How pleasant it will be to mingle in the social circle for holy converse with the great-hearted Paul, the warm-hearted Peter, and the tender-hearted John, and hear from their own lips the thousands of interesting incidents of their own lives, and of the life of Jesus, "the which if they should be written, every one, even the

world itself could not contain the books that should be written." How soul-inspiring to listen to heavenly themes from the fervid and hallowed lips of Isaiah. How delightful to hold converse with David, and Samuel, and Moses, and Joseph, and his father Jacob, and his grandfather Isaac, and his great-grandfather Abraham, and so on, back to Noah, and Enoch, and even to our great progenitor, Adam. What inexhaustible sources of information and instruction will the redeemed find treasured up in the hearts and memories of those men, and what a privilege to see them face to face, and exchange thoughts with them. But a greater privilege still will it be to hold intercourse with that higher order of intelligences to whose friendship and society the Christian will be received in heaven, — a host of pure, happy beings who have never sinned. They have ever taken a deep interest in man; they rejoiced in his creation and conversion; and they rejoice still more in welcoming him to their fellowship and their blessedness. They may inform him how they were commissioned to watch over him, and be his guardians by night and by day, and to defend him from the attacks of those evil spirits who were continually plotting his ruin.

5. *Fifthly*, the Christian in heaven will find a great source of happiness opened to him in the *expansion of his mind*, and the *increase of knowledge*.

In this world, his mental powers were too feeble to grasp anything great; and all knowledge possible to the most gifted intellect was circumscribed within very narrow bounds. How little do we know of *history*! All that is possible for us to know of what has taken place in God's universe, is confined to this little speck of earth, with the exception of a slight allusion to a rebellion which once occurred in heaven. And how little can we learn of the history of *this world* even. The record of the first two thousand years — one-third of its existence under its present organization — is contained in half a dozen pages of the Bible, and more than half of that, occupies but half a page! How many thousand volumes would be necessary to record the interesting and important events that took place before the Flood, of which we know nothing; and how many hundred thousand to fill up the blanks in history from that period to the present time! In heaven these blanks will all be filled; for a book is kept there, in which is recorded the minutest event that has ever transpired from the days of Adam, or will transpire to the end of time, and it will undoubtedly be open for our perusal.

And then each twinkling star is probably inhabited, and has its history, and that history may equal in interest, or far exceed, that of this planet; and it is all known in heaven. And then, more

important and interesting than all the rest, are the annals of heaven itself, from the creation of the first angel, inconceivable myriads of ages back into eternity. What a book is here for an arch-angel to study,—the book of history, the history of earth, the history of the countless worlds above us, and the history of heaven.

How little do we know, in this world, of *natural science*, and how long has it taken to make the few discoveries yet made ! The world had been revolving on its axis, and pursuing its course around the sun in the heavens, at least fifty-five hundred years, till the time of Copernicus, before the wisest men understood its movements. The great, universal law of gravitation was not discovered till the time of Newton, only two hundred years ago. Nothing was known of the science of chemistry till about the same time, and but very little till the present century. The power of steam has but just been developed. Electricity was not understood at all till the time of Franklin, nor the use that could be made of it till our own times, through the far-reaching mind of Professor Morse. How long a time it takes, in this world, to learn only a few of the great facts and laws of nature, and how little does the wisest and greatest mind know of them after all ! A vast deal remains undiscovered which will one day be developed. What facilities must the heavenly student enjoy for investigating the

wonderful works of God in the material creation, and looking into the arcana of Nature, and understanding all her hidden mysteries. And what a source of pleasure to a philosophic mind (and all will be philosophers in heaven), to look at God's works, and comprehend the laws which move worlds in their orbits; to learn what is the nature and use of comets, and whither they wander, and what is the object of their mission, as they plunge, in their rapid flight, into the depths of infinite space; what it is that lights up the aurora borealis, and what that kindles the zodiacal light; whence the meteors that rush through the aerial heavens; what power causes the earth to quake, and tremble from its foundations, "reeling to and fro like a drunken man;" what causes volcanic eruptions, cyclones, waterspouts, and all the various phenomena in this world, and in the visible heavens above us

These subjects are all extremely interesting to the cultivated mind; but how little can be learned of them here! Can we believe these subjects will be less interesting to the glorified spirits in heaven, as they are permitted to trace effects to their causes, while they distinctly see the hand, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Almighty in them all?

Mental and *moral* science, so imperfectly understood in this world, and often made more dark by

the efforts of schoolmen and metaphysicians, who, instead of throwing light, have only "darkened counsel by words without knowledge," will be made clear as the noonday.

The science of *theology* will be understood perfectly. There will be no wranglings and disputings about doctrines; God will reveal himself as he is, in all his glorious attributes. The mysteries of the Trinity, and the Incarnation, so far as God may see it is fit that created beings should understand them, will be comprehended; the doctrines of grace will be cleared of all the objections that have been urged against them, disencumbered of the glosses and extraneous matter with which they had been disguised by worldly wisdom or false philosophy; Divine truth, which came from above, and whose home is in heaven, will appear dressed in its own native, beautiful attire, resplendent as the sun.

Here is the fountain-head of all knowledge pertaining to God's works of creation, providence, and grace, at which the redeemed soul will drink to the full. The most perfect facilities will be enjoyed for studying, under the tutorship of angels, and God himself, every subject that is worthy the attention or investigation of an immortal mind; and the mind itself will find its capacities so enlarged as to grasp and comprehend what is now to the wisest philosophers

unfathomable mystery. I have often thought how much Sir Isaac Newton must enjoy heaven when considered merely as a place for the increase of knowledge. Such were his views of the insignificance of the great attainments he had made in science, after a long life of severe study, in comparison with what remained to be learned, that he said in his old age, "I seem to have been as a child playing on the sea-shore, while the immense ocean of truth lay unexplored before me." There is no doubt in my mind but the increase of knowledge relating to physical, moral, and religious science will constitute no inconsiderable item in the happiness of heaven.

6. *Sixthly.* A source of happiness to the Christian in heaven will be the *exercise of the gracious affections*, particularly those of Gratitude and Love. Once he was a polluted, wretched, lost sinner, in the road to hell; now he is in the realms of bliss, surrounded by saints and angels, and everything that is pure and lovely and good. Here he finds himself, washed from his defilements, and made holy like his glorious companions, in the enjoyment of blessedness unspeakable, and of which his heart never conceived before. How came he hither? Oh, it was by the infinite grace and mercy of God, through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. His redemption from the curse of the law was purchased with blood—the blood of the Lamb of God.

When lost beyond possibility of recovery by any created power, Jesus came from heaven to earth and died to save him, interposing between him and the sword of Divine justice, and received the blow upon his own innocent head. A door of mercy was thus opened for his escape from the wrath to come. What love was that, which could stoop so low, and suffer so much, to save such a guilty, hell-deserving wretch as he! But this was not all. He remembers that his heart was so hard, and his love of sin so strong, that he still persisted in transgression, urging his way through the very blood of his Saviour, down to the chambers of death, till God still farther interposed by his grace, and snatched him as a brand from the burning. By his Holy Spirit, he arrested him in his career, opened his eyes, softened his heart, led him to repentance, and turned his feet into the way of life; and now, as a consequence, he finds himself here in heaven among the blessed! How does his heart swell with gratitude to God and the Lamb, for the mercy and grace that saved him from eternal ruin, and brought him safe to Mount Zion. And oh, how blessed a feeling it is to be *grateful*. In the very exercise of this emotion toward a benefactor, there is a degree of happiness experienced which words cannot express.

Nearly allied to gratitude, is *love*. Love is the

essence of bliss. We know something of what it is when exercised toward a fellow-creature. What on earth gives us so much pleasure as the flowing out of our affections toward a beloved object! But here our love is imperfect,—it is to a great extent mixed with selfishness; but in heaven it is a pure, disinterested affection. It gushes out from the heart like a crystal stream from a perennial fountain, toward every being — blessing and blessed. Its first and supreme object is God, in whom is the concentration of everything that is lovely, and who is himself the source of this holy affection. It was his love that led him to provide a Saviour; it was love that brought Jesus down to earth, to suffer and die; it was love that rendered the sacrifice of the cross effectual to the salvation of the soul; it was love that opened the gates of the heavenly Paradise, and received repentant sinners to its joys. And now, here he is in a world of love! Love rules in heaven, and flows out, like running waters, from every heart. The Deity is all love: God the Father is love; Jesus is love; the Holy Spirit is love. The angels, and the other inhabitants of heaven, are full of love, and the glorified soul is in full sympathy with all he sees about him. This affection is reciprocal; it flows out from the heart, and it is drank into the heart. The very atmosphere of heaven is, so to speak, saturated with love.

The hearts of saints and angels are knit together in one, and all are united, by the same blessed bonds of holy affection, to their adorable Sovereign, and are made one with him. And this is happiness. It is enough, of itself, to make heaven a place of infinite blessedness.

Love will make the soul happy in heaven, not as an *emotion* merely, but as an *active principle*. It will be acted out in efforts to do good. Saints and angels in glory are by no means idle; but joyfully obey the commands of God, in performing errands of mercy and labors of love, as before intimated, not only toward one another, but, it is probable, they are sent off on messages of kindness to other and far distant worlds, inhabited by intelligent beings, created in the image of God, and destined, it may be, at some remote period in eternity, to become fellow-heirs with them to the same heaven.

7. *Seventhly*. The crowning bliss of heaven, that which will constitute the chief ingredient in the cup of the soul's happiness, will be, the redeemed *will see God there, and be permitted to adore him, and sing his praises to all eternity*.

Heaven would be nothing without God. However beautiful the place may be,—however interesting its society,—however great its facilities for making improvements in knowledge,—however delightful its employments, and rapturous its joys

in other respects, all would be comparatively a blank, a vast empty void, without God. All love, all knowledge, all happiness, concentrate in him. He was the object of the Christian's supreme affection on earth, and he will be to all eternity. One great reason why he wished to go to heaven was, that he might see God there; but were he to be disappointed, and have no communion with that Being in whom his soul delights, and have no special manifestation of his presence, even heaven would lose its attractions, and he would sigh to come back to this poor world of pain and sorrow, if so be he might again enjoy the smile and the presence of him whom his soul loveth. But he will not be disappointed. There the saints "shall see God," as they stand before the Throne, and serve him day and night in his temple; "and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." "And I heard a great voice out of heaven," says John, "saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." There, on his throne, surrounded by ineffable glory, will be seen the man Christ Jesus, in union with the Godhead,—"his eyes as a flame of fire, and on his head many crowns, and clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and on his vesture a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." Christ

will then appear to the believer, more than ever he did before, the "chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." What unutterable emotions will enrapture the soul of the glorified saint, as his eye rests upon that beloved form that was pierced for his sake, and that countenance which once wept for the sins of lost man! Oh, what joy to behold him face to face, to share his smile, and to bask in the radiance of his love, while he himself is "changed into the same image, from glory to glory!"

But to see God and the Lamb, seated upon the throne of his glory, and to adore his awful, yet benign majesty, will not comprise all the joy of the ransomed, glorified spirit. A harp will be given him to praise God withal; and he will, with a holy ecstasy, which his heart never conceived of before, join his voice with that of Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and of all the redeemed from among men, from every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, in the new, melodious song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing;" to which the holy angels, standing round about the throne, will respond, as they bow in humble reverence and adoration, "Amen! Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." And then the whole heavenly orchestra,—saints

and angels, a vast multitude, which no man can number, of glorified, happy beings,—as they sweep their golden harps, will unite in one grand refrain, making the heavenly arches ring with the melody of their song, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Amen."

And God will accept the praise, and communicate to each and every worshiper of his own glory and blessedness, till their capacities for happiness are completely filled, so that they can neither ask, nor can God give them, more.

Grant, O Father,—blessed Comforter,—thou risen, glorified, precious Saviour, that we all may meet to sing that everlasting song.

